

Magic bus

Case Stories Document



Magic bus

Manjula Bapuji Madhavi, 17, Community Sports Coach, Chandrapur district, Maharashtra

Manjula Bapuji Madhavi, a 17-year-old girl hails from Roadguda, a small village in the rural areas of Chandrapur district located in the Nagpur division of Maharashtra. She belongs to the Kolam tribe, a scheduled tribe having settlements in the Vidarbha and Marathwada regions of Maharashtra. It is also declared as a primitive tribe in the state¹. There are about three and a half lakh Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Chandrapur, comprising 19.7 per cent of the total population of over 20 lakh². Traditionally, the Kolams prefer to stay away from the non-tribal population of the area. Chandrapur has been significant because of its' rich mineral resources especially coal and limestone, cement factories, thermal power station. The district houses about 6000 small and large scale industries, yet this district falls under the economically backward Vidarbha region, fertile ground for naxalite consolidation. The natural cover provided by the forests, porous borders and socio-economic backwardness of the region has provided impetus to left extremism.




Under such an environment, Manjula underwent the training for Community Sports Coaches (CSC) in January 2009. Manjula is the only girl in her entire tribe who has stepped out of home to study and work. During the training it was



quite evident that she was one of the bright participants full of energy with the willingness to undertake challenges in life. After her training, she initiated sports sessions in her village with the help of another CSC, Gulzar. Through the sessions, they worked towards increasing attendance in schools. They also highlighted the importance of health and hygiene. However, one of the biggest accomplishments which Manjula has made is to have reduced the social divide in her village. She says, "Members from the two different groups would not even sit together when they were called for any village meeting. The sports sessions have helped bridge this divide and today they even play together". Manjula's endeavour has helped releasing the tension between two groups in the village. Manjula, indeed, has

successfully used sport as a catalytic agent for positive social change and sustainable community development by building human capital.

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She is now focusing on the involvement of women from her village in sport sessions and in creating a platform for them to express and develop themselves. "I want to bring about a change in my village," says Manjula, and with her confidence, that change already seems to have begun

¹ Castes and Tribes of India Series No. 7 by S.G. Deogaonkar and Leena Deogaonkar-Baxi

² <http://www.thehindu.com/2009/03/29/stories/2009032960921600.htm>



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Yogesh Madik, 24, Group Leader at Magic Bus Centre for Learning and Development, Karjat, Raigad district, Maharashtra



Yogesh hails from Aasrewadi village in Karjat tehsil of Raigad district, Maharashtra. He comes from a humble background with father working as an assistant cook in Matheran, a nearby place and mother into small time farming of vegetables. He could not receive career guidance and enough motivation at home as to what he should be doing and how he could shape his future.

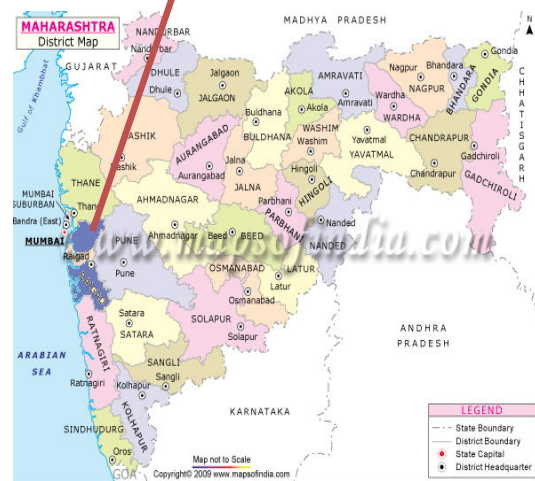
Yogesh recollects that he used to live in an environment where people had negative attitude towards life. Having been influenced by this, he used to feel low about the fact that he is a village boy and does not have access to resources; he will not be able to grow in life. He was introvert and would never interact with girls. During those days he got an opportunity to attend one of the sessions conducted by Magic Bus. He was already fond of sports and here he got to see, learn and experience a completely new dimension of how sport can correlate and translate itself to development of self as well as of community/ society. After attending

the sessions and now conducting Magic Bus sports sessions himself, he realizes that Sports has the capacity to do wonders with one's self-esteem which is actually the root cause to one's success or failure.

Yogesh says, in order to build true/genuine self-confidence, your self-image must be founded in reality. You must know who you are. How we see ourselves is more important than how anyone else sees us. You must have a realistic evaluation of your abilities and you must commit to continued self-improvement. Having good sporting skills already, he was able to enhance his self-esteem and build a positive self-image which overall had a remarkable impact on his confidence level. Through sport he learnt how to interact in intentionally inclusive ways rejecting discrimination or stereotyping based on gender.

He says, *'I am no longer an introvert. I interact with all including girls; last year I helped one of my village girls to participate in Mumbai Marathon and incidentally, she also won the third prize in the event. Girls and boys in my village approach me for career guidance; I counsel them and help them in taking decisions'*.

Yogesh was a volunteer initially and is now a Group Leader with the Magic Bus Centre. In addition to this, he is running a project called 'Jagrukta'. In this programme he has been teaching football to village kids and also been emphasizing upon importance of education during his training sessions based on Magic Bus's training module. He has also received some monetary support from an NGO called Youth Venture that supports youth volunteers who are making some kind of valuable contribution to their



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respective communities. Yogesh also plans to undergo a course in mountaineering this year in order to get an opportunity to enter into the adventure sports industry and build a successful career.

Sport functions as a tool to improve the inclusion and well-being of people with disabilities. With appropriate communication and know-how, sport can function as a powerful tool for transforming community attitudes and empowering individuals with disabilities through the acquisition of new physical and social skills, self-confidence and positive relationships.

.....Wilfried Lemke, UN Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace



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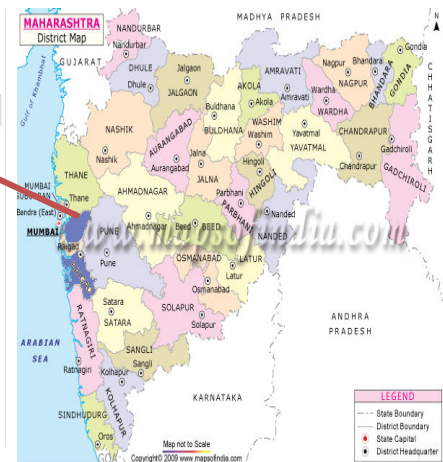
Bhavna Sharma, 21 years, Youth Mentor at Magic Bus Centre for Learning and Development, Karjat, Raigad district, Maharashtra

Bhavna works with Magic Bus as a Youth Mentor. She was earlier a Group Leader at the Centre located in Karjat working with groups coming to the Centre for training. She is associated for the last 3 years. She is also undergoing the second year of her Bachelor in Arts course from SNTD college, Santa Cruz, Mumbai. She is a confident independent girl with a high level of self esteem. However, the conditions in which she grew was definitely not so conducive and motivating. Bhavna had never seen her father and her mother had remarried. Bhavna was not welcome at her mother's new home and the family got her enrolled at the institute. Her mother visited her, but once she passed away Bhavna had no one to call her own. She learnt about her step sister moving to Bombay and followed her to the city when she was only 11. But her sister did not want anything to do with her. Feeling rejected and alone, Bhavna moved from orphanage to orphanage between Delhi and Mumbai searching for a place where she would be loved and accepted. She finally found herself comfortable at 'Asha Sadan', the House of Hope, a rescue home for destitute women and children.



Bhavna grew up here and when she was in school in eighth standard she got the opportunity to attend Magic Bus sessions at Santa Cruz being conducted by one of Magic Bus's trainers called Chirag. With very low motivation and self-esteem and therefore low confidence, Bhavna realizes, *"I can bet, the kind of transformation I can see in myself, it is just because of the learnings from Chirag bhaiya's (brother) sport sessions which taught me not just sport skills but also life skills. I am a much happier and contented person today. My thought process has changed. I look for positive things in whatever I do. I was never able to take decisions on my own and was hardly aware of the outside world. At Magic Bus, we are not told what to do but given the space to express our feelings. The level of participation helps us believe in our abilities. I made up my mind that I wanted to work for Magic Bus. I am currently a Youth Mentor and I am staying in a rented accommodation close to Magic Bus Centre at Karjat with some friends. I am meeting life's challenges as they come."*

Bhavna is very conscious about environment and in all her sessions with kids, she explains the importance of keeping our environment clean. She has undertaken the task of planting trees in the schools where she is conducting sessions. She narrates one another incident which is quite an eye opener. Bhavna recently had fallen ill and had to be admitted to a nearby hospital where was under medical care and supervision for about three months. She therefore



could not go the schools where she used to take sessions. In one of the schools called Netaji Pal School, a student named Pranali, an eighth standard girl initiated to conduct sport sessions in her school with younger kids and classmates in the same manner as Bhavna. After the recovery, when Bhavna rejoined work after a gap of four months and she went to Netaji Pal School, to her dismay, Pranali walked up to her and after greeting her, she said,



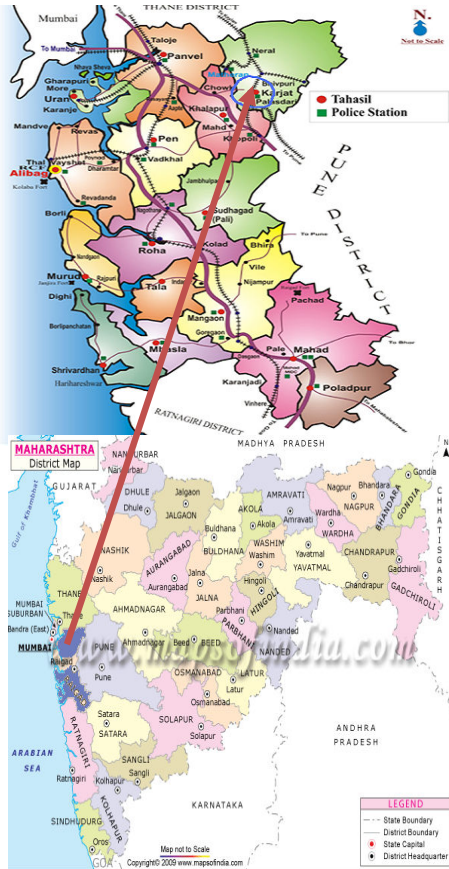
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“didi (sister), for a month there was no session and all the kids really missed you. I therefore thought that till you are back, I should gather children and do the same. We have been taking issues concerning us at home, in our village and in school and we have been refreshing all the lessons that you taught us including the fun that we have in the games.” Bhavna was extremely touched by this feedback and says, *“I did not know I was doing something so valuable. I am sure conducting sport for development sessions has been purposeful and fruitful for children, only then there are leaders that have come up, taken interest and initiated action to let the good thing continue to be practiced even in my absence.”*



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Renuka Sutar, 23, Group Leader at Magic Bus Centre for Learning and Development, Karjat, Raigad district, Maharashtra



Renuka has been associated with Magic Bus for the last 4 years as a Group Leader. She is an undergraduate student. She was brought up in 'Asha Sadan', the House of Hope, a rescue home for destitute women and children. Asha Sadan houses children in the age group of 0 to 6 years and girls from 14 to 20 years. Girls at Asha Sadan, each one are rehabilitated.

Renuka recalls that when she was at Asha Sadan, Magic Bus trainers named Chirag and Rehman took them out on a 3 days camp to a nearby place called Khodala. Renuka narrates, "we were there with other children and with Rehman and Chirag bhaiya for three days. Today when I look back, I can say that those were the most memorable

days of my life. That was the first time when I experienced freedom and came across someone who was not just giving importance to each child but was actually concerned about what we felt, what concerned us, what kind of challenges were we facing in our lives in addition to enjoyable games that bhaiya made us play. One message that I got back from the camp was: **YOU CAN MAKE YOUR WORLD BEAUTIFUL.** This one learning changed my life as I could start thinking beyond the troubles that I was facing. I used to be very short tempered and often used abusive words with other children at Asha Sadan. The learnings from Magic Bus sport sessions helped me in working on my temperament; I stopped using bad words for others as I realized that I should not

indulge myself in anything that hurts others sentiments."

Renuka further says, "If I have achieved anything, it is because of the radical change that I could bring about in my thought process, in my personality as a result of the learnings from sport sessions. Before this there was no one who had come and dealt with us in the way bhaiya did. I continue to implement the learnings in my life and that solely is responsible for the respect I have for myself and that I give to others.'

After having come across with the fact that self development can be brought about effectively, with the help of sports, she wanted to work for the same. She undertook a course in Adventure Sports from an NGO called Saathi and later joined Magic Bus in 2006.



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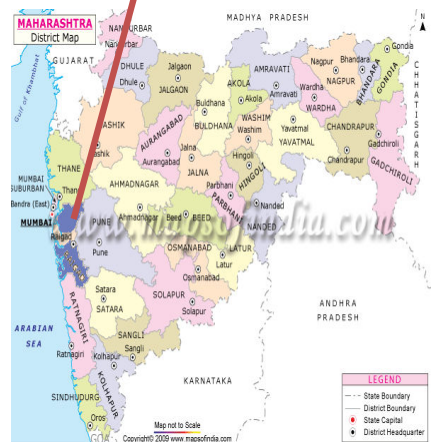
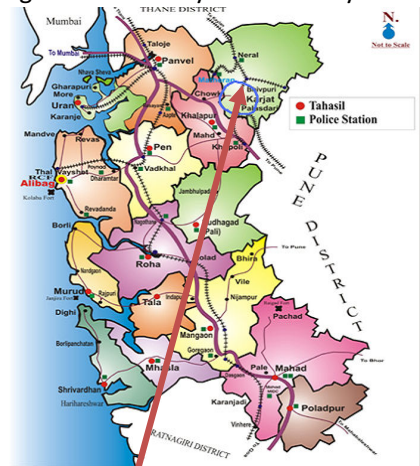
Ashok Kumar, 25, Group Leader at Magic Bus for Learning and Development, Karjat, Raigad district, Maharashtra



Ashok originally comes from Himachal Pradesh. He was born and brought up in a village called Ghurkadi in the district of Kangra. Half of the year his family used to reside in this village and rest half was spent in 'Holi' village located in district Chamba of Himachal Pradesh. His parents used to go for work in Holi which was at a very high altitude and after the decent of snow they used to come back to Kangra. He did his schooling there and since he grew amidst high cliffs, he used to enjoy climbing the mountains since childhood. After turning 21 years of age, he started looking for employment opportunities.

He wasn't really satisfied with the part-time jobs that he got into till the time, Mr Saini, a then employee of Magic Bus offered him a job at the Magic Bus Centre of learning and Development at Karjat (Raigad District, Maharashtra) in May 2006. Since then he has been working at the centre and has played a key role in the establishment and maintenance of the variety of fixtures. He is working as a Centre Assistant, looks after the stores, helps conducting activities on the sea-saw, tyre swing, tarzan swing, commando bridge of ropes etc. and looks after the maintenance of all ropes and other equipment.

Ashok says that his journey with Magic Bus has been a great learning in terms of what impact adventure sports can have on a child's/ adult's life. He says, "since childhood, I am used to see tourists enjoying adventure sports be it river rafting, rock climbing etc. and I have done it myself but when I recollect, I can say that all the activities were so mechanical there! I practiced and enjoyed the sport there but what that sport means to our life is something that I got introduced to here in Magic Bus. Each activity at the centre offers a significant message to children and even older participants (corporate training teams etc.)".



Ashok further explains each of the activities, the high ropes course, the low ropes course, Jacobs Ladder, climbing tower with a zig-zag wire, all have imparted very important learnings which has transformed me into a much more confident person. He says, "the first step onto the face of the ladder/ tower may be easy. It is with patience and examination that the climber must decide upon a route to attempt. Grasping the first handhold, stepping upon the first foothold, the climber then hoists upon it as the belayer tightens the slack in the rope. The combination of low and high ropes courses enable participants to grow at the team and individual levels, exploring risk, leadership, communication, problem-solving, and coaching."



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“For surviving and creating a beautiful life around us, one must have the qualities of courageously facing struggles, perseverance, overcoming of fears, team unity, sense of thrill and victory, boldness to take up challenges. The activities indeed illustrate these sporty manifestations which can be carried to life as well. It is an easy and enjoyable medium to communicate with kids as to how one can imbibe these qualities that can make them live a better life.”

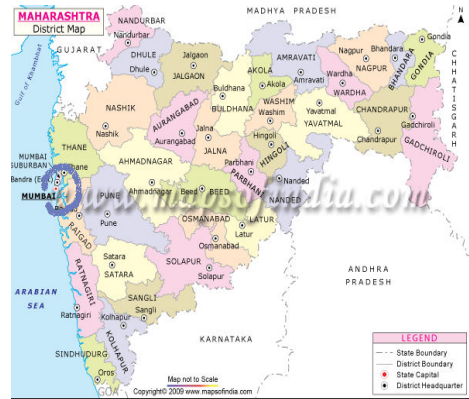


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Ahsan Ansari, 19, Teacher at St. Arnold School and Peer Leader at Magic Bus, Mumbai



Ahsan, a 19 year old boy resides in Dharavi, Mumbai. Dharavi is one of the slum settlements in Mumbai, often classified as one of world's most thickly populated slums, home for about 57,000 families living in an area of 536 acres raising the population density to 17,000 people per acre therefore posing serious problems relating to health, hygiene and sanitation.



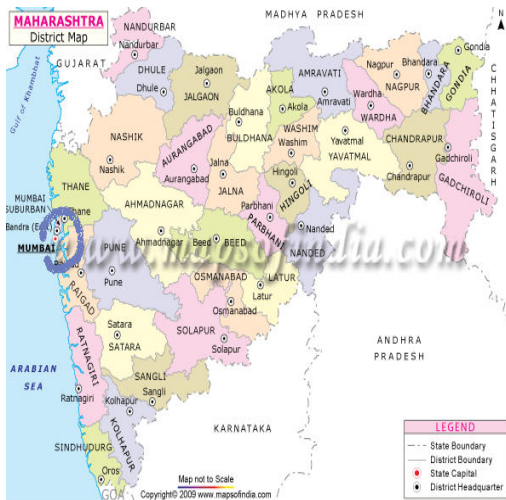
Having been brought up in this slum, Ahsan is very sensitive to problems being faced by his parents and the community. He got the opportunity to attend one of Magic Bus sessions six years ago and since then, Ahsan says, his life has taken a different direction. He was always fond of playing but with Magic Bus, he got the opportunity to further develop his sporting skills and to make it a career option. Along with his studies, he turned out to be a good football player. He was selected in the Magic Bus Football team where with the help of his coach, he has improved upon techniques and skills. With the team, he has been participating in various district level competitions. He is an intermediate grade (class 12) student and goes to attend evening classes. He also undertook a course to learn Microsoft Office, photoshop, hardware etc. and is a computer teacher at St. Arnold School in Andheri, Mumbai. His achievement in sports is now very much talked about in the school where he teaches and the Principal has invited him to contribute to the sport and physical education curriculum of his school. He will soon be conducting sport sessions as well.

Ahsan is a volunteer with Magic Bus and conducts sport sessions at Dharavi. He says, "in my sport sessions with children in my community, I teach them to maintain hygiene and cleanliness, take bath everyday, cut nails and hair when required, not to litter garbage, not to spit and never to abuse anyone. I used to face resistance from my elder brother who used to object my involvement in Magic Bus programme, but I was confident that I am doing something valuable for my community in addition to my football career and sports trainer to children. However, over the years, my parents and brother have realized the worth of my work and I am now rather receiving support from them."



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Gulafsha Ansari, 14, football player, Maharashtra state football team



Gulafsha, a 14 year girl resides in Dharavi, Mumbai. Dharavi is one of the slum settlements in Mumbai, often classified as one of world's most thickly populated slums, house for about 57,000 families living in an area of 536 acres raising the population density to 17,000 people per acre therefore posing serious problems relating to health, hygiene and sanitation.

Gulafsha got inspired by her brother, Ehsaan, a football player and a volunteer with Magic Bus. She used to play with her brother in early days. Her talent soon brought her to play professional football. She plays for the Magic Bus Girls Football team and recently represented Maharashtra in the AIFF (All India Football Federation) Under-14 girls' team to participate in the 6th Sub-Junior National Football Championship at Haldwani, Uttarakhand. Gulafsha's parents are very

happy with her success. Her father says, *"having lived a tough life with scarcity of money and resources all through, I could hardly have dreamt to see my children building a career in sports. Gulafsha has not just brought pride to the family; she has also become a role model for all the girls who have come to know her talent and achievement. She sends a message especially to our Muslim community to allow girl children to explore their talent and secure a better future for them and not live the kind of lives we have lived here."*

Gulafsha is seeking a future in football and says, **"ONE DAY I WANT TO PLAY FOR MY COUNTRY"**.



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Empowering children and youth with positive experiences to enable them to discover and develop through sport

Anwar Sheikh, 24, Assistant Mentor at Magic Bus, Mumbai



Anwar was born in the Dharavi slum settlement of Mumbai. He lived there with his parents and siblings for 10 years and then moved to the Church Gate area of the city where the family resided for the next 12 years. As a child, Anwar loved playing with the ball. Nine years ago, he got introduced to Magic Bus who he says helped him shape his future. He is working with Magic Bus for the last 6 years and is now an Assistant Mentor with the organization. He also practiced Rugby with Mumbai Gymkhana Club for about four years and now plays for 'Magician', a newly formed Rugby Club. He is undergoing the selection process to find a place in the Indian Rugby team to participate in the forthcoming Commonwealth Games in Delhi this year (2010).

Anwar says, "my family has been under immense financial crisis. After completing school, I took up a job and worked for one of the courier services in Mumbai until I got an opportunity with Magic Bus. Sport has taught me to manage my time efficiently". Anwar further explains that if he is asked to compare himself with the kind of background he comes from and what he is today, he could confidently say that he does have made a mark in his life. He attributes his success to sports though he says he has not been able to answer to himself whether it is 'nature' of 'nurture' of sports behind this. Anwar is now taking sessions with children at the Bombay Port Trust and says that he has underwent a lot of improvement in his communication skills and his thought process. He today feels strongly about gender and racial discrimination and one of the important actions he undertook was to fight for his sister who wanted to study and was not receiving adequate support from his parents and family. He stood for her and have not let her education been discontinued.



"Coming from a poor family, living in one of the most underprivileged circumstances, it was still *nature* that drew me to sports as I simply loved playing. But over the years, when I now reflect, I realize that sport *nurtured* me with direct or indirect lessons of risk taking ability, leadership skills, teamwork, discipline and the ability to learn from failure. I always learnt to perform better than what I did previously, not necessarily trying to perform better than who I competed against."

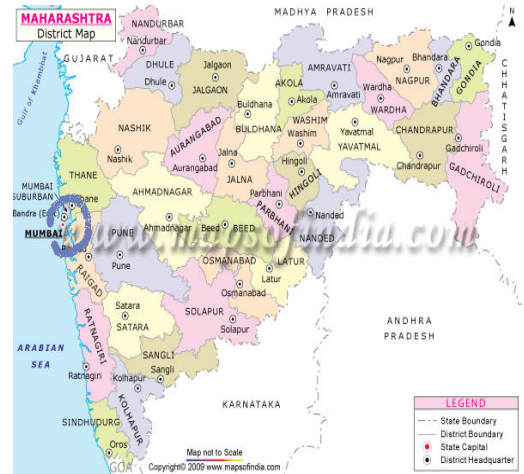


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Gaurang Kishan Chauhan, 22, Assistant Mentor, Magic Bus, Mumbai

Gaurang was born and brought up in Colaba, Mumbai. His parents are fishermen belonging to the 'Koli' tribe, the first people to inhabit the 7 islands that later developed into the mega city of Bombay which was originally an archipelago comprising of seven islands - Colaba, Smaller Colaba, also known as (Old Woman's Island),

Worli, Parel, Mazgaon, Mumbadevi and Mahim. The Koli culture is disappearing rapidly as the city's skyscrapers are closing in on them and most of the fishermen today live in extreme poverty. Gaurang hails from the same background. He hardly received any guidance or motivation from parents to study. He is rather, the only one to have finished school education in his family. He is currently pursuing the first year of the Bachelor in Commerce program.



Gaurang has been associated with Magic Bus for the last eight years and is an employee since three years. He also plays Rugby and has represented Maharashtra at national level tournament. He has played several district level football matches. Gaurang says, *"I have climbed through the Magic Bus program and it is sports that taught me to be courageous. I realize Sports and team games are about spirit, courage and dedication to self improvement and commitment. Sports has provided me with new opportunities to break down personal and cultural limitations and have helped me build resistance and resilience over a period of time"*.

Gaurang takes sessions with children at the Bombay Port Trust (BPT) and specially encourages girls to participate. Gaurang says that through the sport sessions they have managed to bring almost all children to go to school. Before the arrival of Magic Bus, only 40 per cent of the children attended school, the rest earning money by selling vegetables or diving in the filthy local river in search of scrap metal. Now the figure is more than 95 per cent.



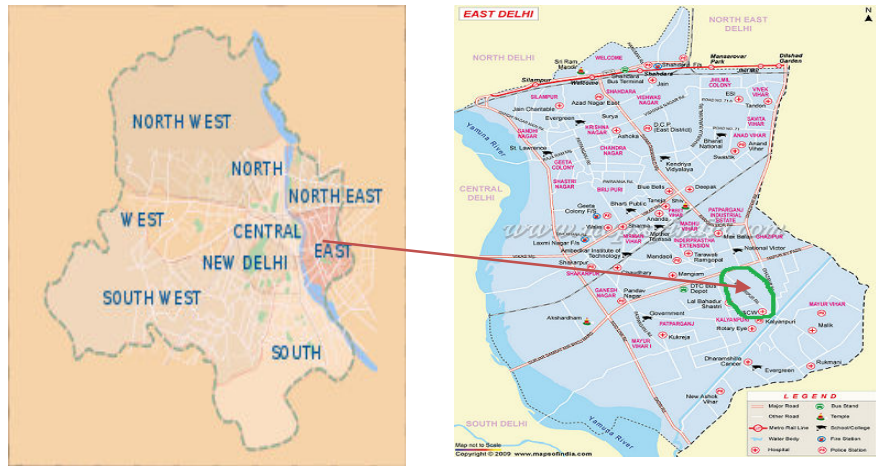
Gaurang cites the example of a BPT child named Yogesh who was a school dropout and misguided into stealing and gambling. However, Yogesh used to enjoy playing and that was the incentive to him to attend magic Bus sessions. Gaurang along with another Magic Bus mentor grabbed this opportunity to feed into his psychology the importance of education and hard work. Taking the example of football, Gaurang tried to explain Yogesh in an indirect manner, "In the game of football, if you push your opponent and try snatching the ball forcibly you will disqualify and may not be allowed to play because of the wrong-doing. Similarly, it is wrong to steal money or any material belonging to others." The message delivery system indeed worked wonders. Yogesh has joined back school and enjoys playing football as well.



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Vijay Chowdhary, 16, CSC, Khichripur, Delhi

Vijay hails from a poor migrant family residing in a very small house in the Khichripur locality of East Delhi district. Khichripur is an urban slum near Mayur Vihar close to the banks of Yamuna river. Vijay is a school going youth (Class 9 student) and passionately practices athletics. His family consists of his parents and two siblings, a brother and a sister.



When he chose to join as Community Sports Coach (CSC), post training when he started conducting sessions he used to exhibit lot of anger and aggression with children on field. Despite being a sportsman, he was poor in controlling emotions. He was unable to maintain discipline in his team and often used to shout and scream on them. Having observed this behavior which could be an aftermath of struggles faced in personal and family life, the Magic Bus sports trainer tried to handle this by explaining in the context of sports. He was told that if a sportsman exhibits the right amount of aggression, the game is half won; the rest half depends on his abilities to exhibit sporting skills. One can observe this in team as well as individual games. Lot of players, by their positive attitude and body language are able to take control of the game. Unless this is resorted to, enforcing discipline becomes a difficult task. Controlled anger and aggression can do a lot more beyond the field, in a person's personal and professional life.

Vijay says, *"in the sporting context, I realized that anger will do me no good. I used to get irritated when I could not control my group of children. By screaming at them, I realized that I will never be able to impart the key lessons of activities in the right manner. Also, I would not be able to develop the connect and emotional bonding with kids. I therefore started working upon this negative aspect of my behavior by controlling my emotions. Today I am friends with my team and especially with my sister with whom I earlier used to quarrel very often. I encourage her to play with me and get her along to the sessions. Earlier I used to forget linking the activity conducted in the session with the message which I now do effectively. Children have started sharing their problems with me which seldom happened earlier"*. Vijay wants to become a professional athlete and this positive attitude will help him not only to become a good sportsman but will also help in smooth conduct of several activities in his life and career.



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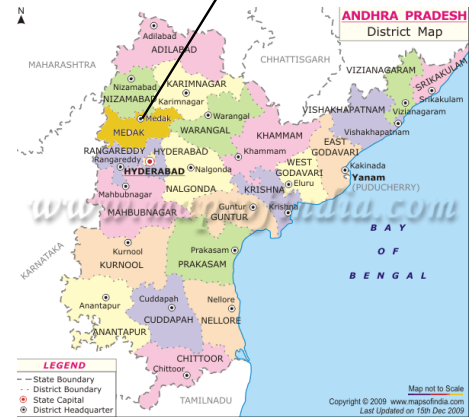
Ganesh, CSC, Amberpet village, Wargal Mandal, MedaK district, Andhra Prades



Ganesh hails from Amberpet village in Wargal mandal of Madak district in Andhra Pradesh. He attended the Community Sports Coach (CSC) training under the 'International Inspiration' programme held in October 08. He lives with his parents who are farmers; wife and a three year old daughter. His primary occupation is that of an electrician. He has always enjoyed playing and that motivated him to undertake the CSC training. Before joining, he found the concept of sport for development very abstract. He was unable to relate sports with development. However as he started understanding the concept, he realized the effectiveness of this

tool. After completion of his training, when he began conducting sessions, he was excited to observe the response from the participants and villagers. Initially he did face problems with regard to availability of playground which he solved by speaking to the villagers and Sarpanch (Head of a Village Panchayat) introducing them to the concept and explaining to them the purpose of the program.

Gradually, Ganesh won the goodwill and support from the village. With the help of the villagers, Sarpanch and youth leaders, he managed to get shoes for children; organized a rally on 26th May 2009 in order to spread awareness about the environment and how important it is for all to keep it clean. The rally received an encouraging response; the awareness campaign talked about importance of planting trees and having a clean-green village, sanitation and hygiene and importance of education and sports in a child's life affecting his/her growth and development. Ganesh took the initiative of planting a few trees in front of each house so that others are encouraged to take the drive further. He has also been constantly encouraging participation of girls.



- 44 Wargal Mandal
- Medak district

Having been associated with the II project for more than a year, Ganesh says that Sports in one of the most effective tools for community building. Using sports as a medium, one can creatively consult existing groups and networks and can build communication with the otherwise most 'hard-to-reach' groups. Through sports one can emphasize upon co-operation rather than competition, develop leadership from within the community, solve issues concerning community members locally yet take every opportunity to have fun and celebrate.



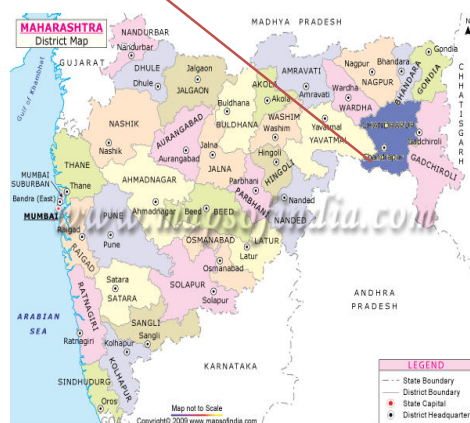
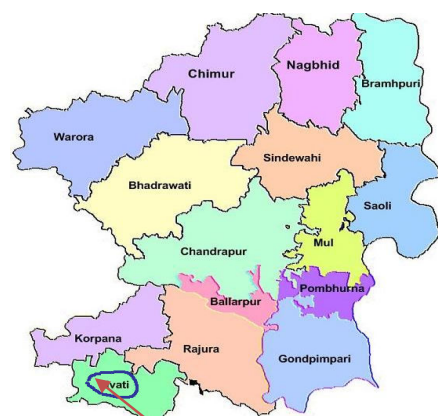
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Lakshman Madhav Pitlewad, 20, Tekkamandava village, Jivati tehsil, Chandrapur district, Maharashtra



Lakshman is a 20 year old youth born and brought up in a village of Jivati tehsil called Tekkamandava where his father is also the Sarpanch (Head of village panchayat). This is one of the most backward areas in the country. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor degree course in Computer Applications (BCA) and is also a Community Sports Coach (CSC). He has been a state level volleyball player. After having received CSC training, when he started conducting sessions in and around his village, he could

identify that child marriage was the most serious issue confronting the community and needed correction. During the sport sessions he took the opportunity to educate participants on the ill-effects of child marriage. He emphasised upon the importance of girls getting educated and that they should learn how to protect their rights. Lakshman also attempted to address this issue in the Gram Sabha (Village meeting organised under the supervision of the Sarpanch) after having judged favourable response from villagers especially participants of his sessions.



Another sphere where sessions have brought about positive impact is on discipline in children. Lakshman had not realised that his sessions are sending across messages which children are carrying to their school and home as well. He received his feedback from one of the teachers in the village school. His observation was that children in his school have become punctual, they wash their hands before having food, they are not quarelling amongst themselves. The teacher told Lakshman, *“Children have been showing this behaviour change ever since they are attending your sports sessions and I appreciate this has not been thrust upon them, instead, I notice, it is self-realisation as an outcome of which they are much more disciplined today. I can see the change.”*

Lakshman says, “It is too early for me to say if child marriages in my community will be stopped by this effort, but I am sure, I have forced people to at least think seriously about the matter. My sessions have recorded an increase in girls participation and most of them are also in school. Initially it was difficult getting girls out of their homes to play but now they are very excited. They have also started sharing their problems and express that they want to study and want to build a better future for themselves instead of getting married at an early age and ruining their lives. It is sports that facilitated this easy communication of addressing such a serious issue.”



Magic bus

Parvati Baban Pujari, 19, Youth Mentor, Magic Bus, Mumbai

Parvati was in Gulbarga district of Karnataka. Her parents were marginal workers there but due to lack of employment opportunities they migrated to Mumbai with Parvati and her six sisters. They started working at a construction site of a multi-storied building called Pheonix. Until she was 9 years old, she did not get the opportunity to go to school. Her parents were of the opinion that girls should not study, they should be taught household work only. At 9, she and her parents were approached by an NGO called Sunbeam which works for children of migrant construction workers, domestic workers children living in the chawls of Mumbai. They have a comprehensive programme, which stresses education, recreation and community involvement.

Parvati got enrolled in municipal school through Sunbeam. After a year, when she was 10, she got the opportunity to participate in a camp organized by Magic Bus (a partner of Sunbeam). Parvati



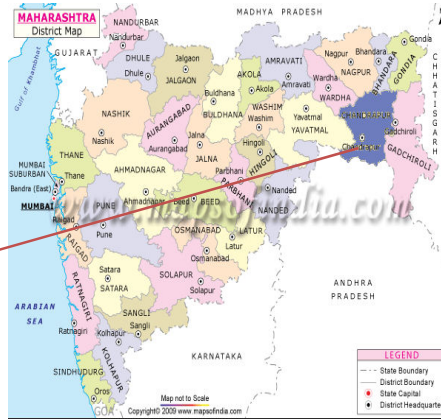
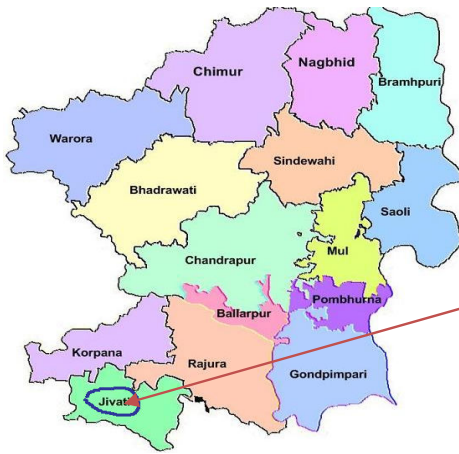
narrates, *“this was first time that I experienced the thrill of playing, I was never exposed to such an environment of fun, play and learning at the construction site.”* Parvati further says that she was a good student but her parents objected to her education. During the sport sessions of Magic Bus, when she shared her problems with bhaiya (brother- the sports trainer), she was told that she should respect her parents but at same time she needs to stand for herself and should not succumb to the pressure and leave studies. Parvati continued with her education and has also practices athletics. She is working for Magic Bus as a Youth Mentor and also attends night college. She is pursuing the first year of Bachelor in Commerce programme from Siddhartha College. She recently participated in the inter-college athletics competition and won the gold medal in all the events: Sprint- 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m; long jump, shot-put, javelin, discus throw and a team event of 50 m hurdles. Her parents have acknowledged her achievements and they also her younger sisters to attend school.

The trust that develops between coaches/ trainers and the young people they mentor provides an opportunity for discussion of the crucial issues that affect their lives every day. This trust can become bedrock for significant personal growth.



Magic bus

Sudhakar Lалуji Rathod, 23, CSC, Pittiguda village, Jiwati tehsil, Chandrapur district, Maharashtra; Sangeeta Namdev Rathod, 20, CSC, Devlaguda village, Jiwati tehsil



Sudhakar, a 20 year old youth hails from , Pittiguda village, Jiwati tehsil of Chandrapur district. Jiwati, one of the most backward taluks in Chandrapur, people have to walk two kilometres up and down the hill to fetch water. The irrigation scenario is equally dismal. Of the 11,000 hectares of agricultural land, only 3,000 hectares are irrigated. Because of this, Chandrapur can reap only one harvest. This village belongs to the predominantly tribal areas of Chandrapur district where there is immense scarcity of drinking water. Around 65 villages in Chandrapur district suffer from scarcity of drinking water.³

Realising this acute shortage of water, Sudhakar is trying to address this through sports sessions where apart from playing he has been educating them on the importance of reducing water wastage. With the help of villagers he has also taken the initiative of installing taps wherever possible.

Another CSC called Sangeeta Namdev Rathod working in Jiwati tehsil has been raising concern on alcoholism. In meetings with community members in the village she says, “ we are a community that earns Rs 50 per day per household. If we spend Rs 20 on alcohol, how can we sustain ourselves in Rs 30 a day managing food for the family and education for children. You have to save this twenty rupees and make the best use of it rather than wasting it on alcohol.” Also, initially girls would not come to attend sessions but after CSCs having interacted with community members, they are now assured of the fact that sessions are about children playing and getting educated about a variety a new things that they would not have propably learnt at their school or home. *Now when Sudhakar and Sangeeta yell, “Pilelo” (thats the way CSCs in Chandrapur excite children to come out of their homes and play) girls and boys come running, gather at the playground and with eyes sparkling in joy and excitement, they say “oh oh” !*



³ <http://www.thehindu.com/2009/03/29/stories/2009032960921600.htm>



Magic bus