



JANAAGRAHA FINANCES

: AN OPEN BOOK

1) Where is the money coming from
 a) All of Janaagraha's expenses are being met by Ramanathan Foundation.
 b) Ramanathan Foundation has ONLY the personal funds of Swati and Ramesh Ramanathan. There are no other contributions in Ramanathan

amount.
 2) How much has been spent so far
 a) So far, Ramanathan Foundation has taken in Rs 1.85 crores.
 b) Of this amount, Rs 1.72 crores has gone towards meeting Janaagraha's expenditures; the

Communications, vi) Training, vii) Janaagraha Technology Initiative (JAGRATI), viii) Volunteer Coordination, ix) Bala Janaagraha, x) Yuva Janaagraha, xi) Corporate Janaagraha, xii) Partner Programmes.

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CM proposes, BCC disposes and Bangalore pays the price

TO THE POINT

H.S. Balram



The Bangalore City Corporation (BCC), the key civic agency meant to keep the city spic and span, has the knack for being in the news for all the wrong reasons. Be it the recent death of an old man and a newly married couple in drains left uncovered, electrocution of a boy and a girl as the buildings they lived in were illegally built close to high tension wires, or newly tarred roads developing potholes after one good downpour. The latest is the collapse of two buildings constructed less than 20 years ago by the BCC for the economically weaker sections. In fact, the BCC appears to be the main stumbling block in the efforts being put in by the S.M. Krishna government and private enterprises to make Bangalore a world class city. Sadly, there is no

accountability. Rather the BCC takes pride in saying that it saved the lives of many by moving them out before the buildings collapsed. A great job indeed. But in the same vein, shouldn't the BCC be held responsible for the deaths of those who entered the buildings? When a non-government organisation like Janaagraha tried to bring in transparency and accountability in the functioning of public service providers, by monitoring the works taken up by the BCC, corporators across the board, passed a resolution warning against interference from outsiders. They accused Janaagraha of misguiding citizens and giving them a wrong picture of the organisation. They also charged Janaagraha with

private contractors. They appoint pourikarmikas to sweep, clear garbage and upload it on to trucks. A junior health inspector makes a round of your area every morning. To keep tabs on the work. To clear the corridors, till the hands are clean. When a non-government organisation like Janaagraha tried to bring in transparency and accountability in the functioning of public service providers, by monitoring the works taken up by the BCC, corporators across the board, passed a resolution warning against interference from outsiders. They accused Janaagraha of misguiding citizens and giving them a wrong picture of the organisation. They also charged Janaagraha with

collecting funds in the name of public service and misusing them. Yes, Janaagraha must come clean on the funds is, sue, howsoever good its intentions" are. But the BCC, by harping on it, cannot skirt the main issue of transparency and accountability. It appears to be afraid that the lid on Financial misappropriation in the corporation will be off, if more and more citizens' groups start looking into its working....

the world are making a beeline to the city to set up shop here. Investments are pouring in. But civic amenities and infrastructural facilities are inadequate. Not that nothing is being done on this front. But the pace is slow. Corrupt and lethargic officials add to the problem. Civic agencies, particularly the BCC, must set their house in order if Bangalore has to compete with world's top cities. BCC commissioner Sreenivasa Murthy is a level-headed and hands-on bureaucrat. He is doing his best to put things in order. But to change the work culture in an organisation that is steeped in corruption and lethargy for years is a herculean task. None of his predecessors survived in the post for as long as he has. As soon as they got sniping around, they were hunted out. Chief Minister Krishna must crack the whip and put this organisation on the right track, if he is keen to see his dream of turning this city into another Singapore becoming a reality.

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 SUNDAY, Nov 16, 2003

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Foundation, from institutions or individuals.
 c) Janaagraha is a partner in the PROOF campaign. Here, all common expenses of the campaign are paid for by campaign partners, but each partner pays for its own expenses. For the first year of the PROOF campaign, the total common expenditures were Rs 7 lakhs, shared equally by 4 partners; Janaagraha's share was 25% of this

remaining money has gone for other social activities, including the publishing of a book on Urban Poverty.
 c) Ramanathan Foundation's audited financial statements are available for perusal.
 3) What is it being spent on
 a) Janaagraha currently has 12 activities, as given below:
 i) Administration, ii) Ward Planning, iii) PROOF, iv) Urban Poor, v)

INSIDE PAGES

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GO, JANAAGRAHA GO!

Janaagraha is not an institution – it is a citizen's platform, which gives shape to participatory democracy. All citizens of Bangalore who are interested in the betterment of city are Janaagrahis.

- PACE (People's Action for Cleaner Environment), Ward 78

•••

'We fully support the selfless (and at times even thankless) mission that Janaagraha is involved in. Raj Mahal Vilas Resident Welfare Association will continue to support and encourage the programs of Janaagraha.'

- JK Chandra, President
- Deepak Shah, Hon. Secretary
Raj Mahal Vilas Resident Welfare Association

•••

We are deeply appreciative of the efforts you are taking to deepen democracy and to make governance answerable to people. Keep up the good work you have begun. As you say, opposition is inevitable but we are on the right track.'

- Fr. M.J. Edwin, Secretary

•••

'It is with dismay that I have been following the recent events and some forces trying to scuttle all the good work

Janaagraha is doing. We are fully with you in your mission to bring transparency and public involvement. I am sure the clouds will pass.'

- D.V.R. Seshadri

•••

**SUPPORT
POURS IN
FROM ALL
CORNERS**

'I want you to know that we share your pain, distress and anger. Keep going...'

- Vidya, MYRADA

•••

'The newspaper article had a positive effect. It made dormant participants like me wake up and recommit.'

- Umesh

•••

'The outbursts from some quarters of the Council is to be expected. But all

the dust will settle down sooner than later. God bless you.'

- Lakshminarayanan

•••

I was shocked and pained to read about the resolution and the related proceedings in the BMP Council. This raises several important questions. Does the Act that governs the BMP preclude the corporation listening to the suggestions of the citizens or the latter voicing their concerns and priorities to the corporation, either individually or collectively? Are these inconsistent with the provisions of the Act governing the Municipal Corporation?

- Anil Kumar, MVK Convenor,
Ashwini Lay Out Residents' Association, Ward 68

•••

'GB Shaw had written long back that this is bound to happen to people who are ahead of their times. Like Joan of Arc and Mohd.Nabi. Please accept my total support for the cause you are fighting for.'

- Hemchand Mallya

'Please continue the work and your support base is getting larger. All well meaning citizens are with you.'

- R. Thothadri

Do NGOs such as *Janaagraha* work against the BCC?

VIJAYA TIMES
FRIDAY, OCT 31, 2003

Janaagraha represents the voice of the people, while BCC is a fully functioning body of the government, with its own responsibilities and duties. Both should work in tandem.

-Mabesh Dattani, Playwright

It has been my experience during tenure as minister in the State cabinet that the BCC opposes anything innovative that is put forward by NGOs. This is because the bureaucracy is so well-entrenched and its officials non-transferable, which renders all its activities very non-transparent.

-Anant Nag, Actor and former minister

According to newspaper reports, BCC accuses *Janaagraha* of demanding money from the people to fund its activities. The latter's coordinator

however, denies this charge, saying that he spends his own money. If this is true, and he is not using government money or duplicating BCC's work, then it is not infringing on the authority of the BCC.

-Dr. MS Thimmappa, Vice-Chancellor, BU

SELECT SIX

In India, change cannot happen suddenly. It demands the cooperation of both the government and citizen groups to help bring about development. If *Janaagraha* is trying to create awareness about citizen's rights among the people, the BCC should not oppose them. I don't know where the misunderstanding cropped up.

- Suresh Heblikar, Environmentalist

Janaagraha is trying to help citizens. It is unfortunate that the BCC is opposing it. The organisation is not trying to take over the BCC, but, only

ensures greater transparency in the BCC's functioning. *Janaagraha* is trying to clean up corruption in the system and we need more such organisations.



- Dr UR Anantha Murthy
noted Kannada writer

I don't think the charges of the BCC against *Janaagraha* are valid. I have sat through one of their meetings and I think that requesting information from a government body is the right of every citizen. The BCC's ire against *Janaagraha* seems to show that it is jealous of its power. This is enough to show that *Janaagraha* has been effective.

- Shashi Deshpande, noted writer

BCC council attacks 'interfering' Janaagraha

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: The Bangalore City Corporation (BCC) council witnessed uproarious scenes on Wednesday when members, cutting across party lines, came down heavily on the functioning of Janaagraha and demanded that a criminal case be filed against the campaign coordinators.

The members took strong objections to Janaagraha's claims - that the organisation was instrumental in the budget-making of BCC, preparation of estimates, and carrying out ward works. The council approved a resolution terming Janaagraha "an illegal institution" which has no right to interfere in the working of BCC and that the commissioner should initiate suitable action.

Former mayor K. Chandrashekar sought to know whether the authorities

Charges denied

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: Responding to the allegations, Ramesh Ramanathan of Janaagraha said the whole initiative is to involve citizens in development, and also budget preparation of their wards. "We are a citizen platform and we have not advertised anywhere asking people to contact us for civic works. Through the ads, we have informed people to get in touch with us if they want to participate in the initiative. The funds being spent are from Ramanathan Foundation," he said.



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THURSDAY, OCT 30, 2003

had given Janaagraha any powers to interfere in the financial affairs of the BCC. He alleged that Janaagraha was misleading residents by claiming to carry outward works.

"Why is Janaagraha so interested in the affairs of BCC? The organisation wants to 'project itself as second fiddle. We do not need a parallel system," he said.

Pointing out advertisements on radio, he said: "The advertisement says, 'Bangaloreans, if you have any problems connected with civic works in your wards, please contact Janaagraha'. Who has been flinding these advertisements?"

"Register a police complaint against campaign coordinator Ramesh Ramanathan," he demanded.

Members M. Kuppuraj, B.S. Satyanarayana, Jameel Ahmed and Padmanabha Reddy said it is a "shame on the council to allow an outsider to hold the

reins of administration."

The members also criticised officials for diligently attending meetings convened by Janaagraha and submitting financial details to them.

In response, BCC commissioner M.R. Sreenivasa Murthy made it clear that no organisation could act as second fiddle to the civic body. He assured the House that he would check the publicity material released by Janaagraha, and if found to have crossed limits, it would be conveyed to the NGO.

"Resident associations hold civic meetings to discuss area problems, where officials are invited. For instance, Civic, Swabhimana, PAC, Janaagraha or The Times of India's Times Connect. Even I have attended such meetings. When voluntary organisations offer to chip in, we cannot refuse," Murthy clarified.

THURSDAY, OCT 30, 2003

DECCAN HERALD

Action against Janaagraha if it 'misguides' public: BMP

BANGALORE: The Bangalore Mahanagar Palike (BMP) Council today passed a resolution to initiate legal action against Janaagraha if it is found to "misguide the people by disseminating false information about the civic body's activities." The council also directed the commissioner to identify the development works in the city, and ensure the proper and efficient execution of the same.

NGO dubbed unauthorised

BANGALORE: A city-based NGO, Janaagraha, has been dubbed an unauthorised body by the Bangalore City Corporation (BCC) council. The council also directed the commissioner to identify the development works in the city, and ensure the proper and efficient execution of the same.

Janaagraha denies corporators' charge

THE HINDU, Saturday, November 1, 2003

'File a criminal case against Janaagraha'

BVT NEWS
THE Bangalore City Corporation (BCC) Council passed a resolution to initiate action in future against Janaagraha, a City-based NGO, if the organisation claims to be an alternative to the BCC. At the monthly BCC meeting on Wednesday, corporators complained that it had in many instances taken credit for the works executed by corporators or

forum must work in tandem with government agencies and not try to take their place.
In reply to corporators demands, BCC Commissioner Sreenivasa Murthy said, "I know Janaagraha arranges interaction between people, BCC officials and corporators. Many of you have attended it and I have attended it too. I don't see any harm. When citizens are offering to help, why should we decline it?"

"However, if an agency crosses its limits and claims it will undertake the works that should be done by the BCC, then we will have to warn the agency I have come across any materials or advertisements by the forum that seek to undermine the BCC. There is no doubt that only the BCC can undertake development works. It would be violation of Karnataka Municipality Corporation Act, 1976, if any other agency infringes upon this." He said he would study the material and advertisements released by Janaagraha before initiating action.

prepare their plans for their ward. There was no statement that Janaagraha would propose the city's budget or execute civic works for the people.
All the financial requirements of Janaagraha were being met with the personal funds of the two coordinators, through a non-profit trust called Ramanathan Foundation. Money was not being collected from the public for Janaagraha's activities, they said.
Janaagraha requested transparency in the functioning of Government and "our own activities are an open book," Mr. Ramanathan and Ms. Swathi Ramanathan said.
They offered to participate in any open discussion on the issues raised in the BCC Council, including with the corporators who had spoken against the movement.
"We recognise that the path to deepening democracy will have many distractions; we are prepared for these.
We will continue to provide the platform for constructive citizen engagement with Government and elected representatives," the release said.

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Ramanathan reacts

WHEN contacted, Founder, Janaagraha, Ramesh Ramanathan said his organisation had never projected itself as an alternative to the BCC. "We have always maintained that the elected representatives play a major role in development. We have only tried to bring in increased citizen participation," he said. According to him, Janaagraha had never tried to undermine BCC's authority.
Reacting to a few corporators' accusations that Janaagraha was making money by misleading people, Ramanathan said, that Janaagraha was funded by Ramanathan Foundation. "It is my money and my wife's (who is co-founder, Janaagraha) money. I'm open to discuss matters with any corporator or BCC official who has any doubts on this or the work we do," he added.

JOURNEY TOWARDS BETTER GOVERNANCE NEVER STOPS

This is our response to newspaper reports dated Thursday, October 30th 2003 regarding certain discussions in the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP) Council about Janaagraha and the passage of a resolution on the matter.

While it has been the policy of Janaagraha to communicate only on matters relating directly to its core activities, silence in this regard might be misconstrued for weakness. Hence we wish to make the following statement:

- The central idea of Janaagraha is that citizens need to engage with their governments to get better governance. The legal and moral argument for citizen participation is unquestionable; after all, governments exist for citizens.
- Citizen participation is increasingly being seen throughout the world as the only sustainable solution to the governance problem. In India itself, citizen participation is being actively sought by the Government of Delhi through its Bhagidari scheme, as well as the State Government of Kerala through its People's Plan Campaign.
- Janaagraha is not an NGO or an intermediary between the citizens and their government; it is a platform intended for citizens to help themselves.
- Janaagraha is not seeking to establish a parallel government. Indeed, it has consistently emphasised the central role of the elected representative, and has sought to strengthen their role through increased citizen interaction.
- Citizen participation in Janaagraha's campaigns has been steadily increasing over the 20 months since our launch. Three campaigns are under way, with thousands of citizens taking part, including the poor of Bangalore. In several wards, corporators are also actively supporting these steps of the citizens.
 - One of our campaigns is exclusively for the Urban Poor in Bangalore. Over the past 12 months, under the leadership of the Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA), a successful pilot programme to revitalise a government scheme called SJSRY has taken root. This is already having a positive effect on the lives of over 4,000 poor families in Bangalore.
 - In our latest campaign – Ward Vision – over 2,000 citizens in 10 wards are taking part in determining a vision for their own wards, to be discussed with their Corporator and city administration; 8 Corporators have attended sessions at these workshops. In this campaign as well, slum residents from all concerned wards have had an exclusive workshop to address their issues.
 - Opinion leaders from a variety of fields in the city have taken part in various activities of Janaagraha, expressing their support for the work being done.
 - In addition, over 5,000 volunteers have given their time and expertise in various forms to support the work of Janaagraha. These volunteers are participating either individually, or through well-structured programmes

called Bala-Janaagraha (for school children), Yuva Janaagraha (for college students) and Corporate Janaagraha (for employees of companies).

- As regards the specific discussion in the BMP council, we have written to the BMP Commissioner stating that we will fully cooperate with any inquiry that he wishes to conduct about our activities, and have also sought information on the resolution that has been passed.
- Janaagraha does not have a copy of the resolution or the minutes of the deliberations of the BMP Council meeting. However, from press reports, we understand that certain allegations – some of a personal nature – were made during the discussions. We wish to offer the following clarifications:
 - There have never been any statements made about Ramesh Ramanathan preparing the BMP Budget, or of Swati Ramanathan helping people become corporators.
 - All our communication material for our current campaign titled Ward Vision is related to helping citizens prepare their plans for their ward. There is no statement made that Janaagraha will prepare the city's budget or execute civil works for citizens.
 - All the financial requirements of Janaagraha are being met with the personal funds of Swati and Ramesh Ramanathan, through a not-for-profit trust called Ramanathan Foundation. There are no collections being taken from the public for any activities of Janaagraha.

In the same vein that Janaagraha espouses transparency in the functioning of government, our own activities are an open book. We are happy to participate in any open discussion on the issues raised in the BMP Council, including with the few corporators who have expressed concerns.

We recognise that the path to deepening democracy will have many distractions; we are prepared for these. We will continue to provide the platform for constructive citizen engagement with government and elected representatives.



Swati Ramanathan
Campaign Co-ordinator



Ramesh Ramanathan
Campaign Co-ordinator

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Where does Janaagraha get its funds from?

(Contd from Page 1)

b) The expenses of Janaagraha are incurred in these 12 activities, based on the specific programmes being undertaken in each activity. For example:

- i) Regular administration (running the office etc) costs about Rs 1.5 lakhs per month.
- ii) Janaagraha Times is brought out every fortnight: this costs Rs 30,000 per month.
- iii) The Ward Planning campaign completed a property-level survey with college students. There were expenses incurred in converting this survey work into GIS-maps; this cost Rs 2 lakhs.



Members of Cox Town Residents' Association, Grahaka Shakti and Jana Vedike staged a demonstration in support of Janaagraha on Nov 7 at M.G. Road. Former city Police Commissioner Mr. H.T. Sangliana and others participated.

iv) The Urban Poor activity has several activities in it. One activity is related to improving an existing Government of India poverty scheme called Swarna Jayanati Shehari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY). The Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA) is taking the lead in running a pilot programme in Bangalore. Making this pilot a reality took almost 8 months of coordination between the Government, the banking sector, the NGOs and the poor. Some of this required a survey of the poor's banking needs. All the coordination expenses were borne by Janaagraha to ensure that the pilot project would be formally launched.

v) Activities like Bala Janaagraha require financial expenses like bus arrangements for field trips, material for school children etc.

vi) There is a lot of material that Janaagraha generates as part of the collateral for Participatory Democracy. This is in the form of leaflets, forms, booklets, and most recently a book on Participatory Planning. These expenses are planned and produced as per the requirements of each campaign.

vii) Janaagraha uses advertising in mass media and community communication channels like newspapers and community papers to reach out to citizens. Over the course of the past two years, advertisements about our work have appeared in these channels, all of which were paid for.

viii) Janaagraha has a website, as well as a significant

amount of effort being applied in building a world-class technology platform for citizens. While a lot of this effort happens through volunteers, there are still funding requirements in this area, for hardware, software applications, web-design etc.

ix) Central to the idea of Janaagraha is the idea of citizen communities, and their engagement with the local government. For this, a great deal of training is required to strengthen citizen communities. Over the past six months, an independent training firm has been engaged to identify the kinds of training that citizen communities need, and to provide this to citizen groups in 10 wards. This exercise has cost Rs 5.5 lakhs.

x) Over the past year, almost 5,000 people have volunteered in various capacities with Janaagraha. However, there are some full-time volunteers who work at the Janaagraha office who are getting compensated. While this number varies, it is about 12-15 people at any point in time. However, these compensations are not in any way "market" compensations, just a recognition that people have obligations to take care of : family etc.

c) In sum, **Janaagraha's expenses are being incurred in creating the "TOOLKITS" for citizens, and making these freely available to any citizen group that is interested in making participatory democracy a reality.**

d) These expenses do not factor in the thousands of free hours being given by hundreds of

(Contd... Page 6)

Where does Janaagraha get its funds from?

By Ramesh Deshpande

Where does Janaagraha's money go? What is it being spent on?

VIEWPOINT

... an all respected element of ...
 ... across to it.
 ... to give something back to society in ...
 ... of our own passion or interest ...
 ... staff funds to fill our ...
 ... go back the rest.
 ... are passionate about the idea of ...
 ... supporting programme in ...
 ... in the idea of participatory democ ...
 ... is about building responsive ...
 ... efficiency. This is a painstaking ...
 ... to build help and expertise ...
 ... Janaagraha has chosen to do this ...
 ... to reaching the millions of the ...
 ... world that are like in India every ...
 ... body is pushed for them there are ...
 ... social work, leadership, technol ...
 ... and appropriate communication ...

THURSDAY, NOV 23, 2006

Shantika Thakur for Deshpande, November 20, 2006

JANAAGRAHA FINANCES: AN OPEN BOOK

(Contd from Page 5)

volunteers who have come forward over the past two years to give their time and skills to promote the idea of participatory democracy.

4) Where is the Ramanathans' Money coming from

a) Both Swati and Ramesh Ramanathan had successful careers in the US and UK before returning to India. b. Ramesh Ramanathan's career in Investment Banking with one of the leading financial institutions of the world was a very successful one. He left the bank at a very senior level, after many years of significant compensation for services rendered.

c) Swati and Ramesh Ramanathan are financially comfortable. **All the funds are the result of legitimate personal income and investments, having been fully taxed and accounted for.**

5) Why are they spending this kind of money

a) There are many who choose to give something back to society, in areas of their own passion or interest.

b) Swati and Ramesh Ramanathan believe that they have sufficient funds to fulfil their personal requirements, and have chosen to give back the rest to the society.

c) Both are passionate about the idea of improving governance in India by deepening democracy.

6. Is this kind of spending Necessary

a) The idea of participatory democracy is about building responsible citizenry. This is a painstaking process, to build hope and capacities in the people.

b) Janaagraha has chosen to do this by recognising the realities of the world that we live in today: everybody is rushed for time, there are increasing demands being placed on individuals. Training, Toolkits, Technology, appropriate communications etc are all important elements of ensuring a strong citizen platform.

c) Nobody knows the right answer. All these are experiments in trying to reach a common goal of transparency and citizen participation; all we can ask for is that we have a strong moral compass in directing our work.

7. Can this kind of financing be sustainable

a) We believe that Janaagraha's funds are being spent in creating the platform. Once this platform is created, once the basic toolkits of participation are available, citizens have ready access to it.

b) Over the past 2 years, many aspects of this citizen platform are in place; however, there is still much more work left to be done. Janaagraha is committed to continuing this activity as long as it takes.

8. What if citizens want funds for their own activities in their communities or neighbourhoods

a) Citizen communities have existed well before Janaagraha was formed. They raise their own funds through memberships etc., and many of these are being run exceedingly well.

b) If citizen groups are interested in Janaagraha's work, they participate voluntarily. They are welcome to take whatever they want, and reject the rest.

c) Citizen groups interested in creating a ward-level platform for themselves in order to network and improve the efficiency of their functioning can start a federation at the ward-level.

d) Janaagraha has helped citizens form such federations over the past 18 months. Federations have already sprung up in 6 wards.

e) These federations also require funds to sustain themselves. These funds should come directly from their own areas, through memberships etc. from local welfare associations, individuals and institutions. While this approach can work over the medium-term, it requires some assistance to get started.

f) For this Janaagraha has started an independent Trust called Janaagraha Community Development Fund (JCDF). The idea here is to support ward-level federations through the first 3 years of their existence.

g) Funding for JCDF has initially come from Ramanathan Foundation. However, as this idea shows merit, and more federations want to take this support, other sources of funding will be tapped.

h) It must be noted here that

i) No external funds have been raised for JCDF so far.

ii) JCDF funds will be used directly to assist ward-level federations, and not for any of Janaagraha's own activities.

iii) Before any external funds are raised, an independent Board of Trustees will be formed for JCDF, to ensure transparency and accountability.

9) Any other comments

a) Over the past 2 years, several well-wishers have asked whether they could contribute to Janaagraha's activities. This offer has been politely declined exactly because the current situation had been anticipated.

b) While Swati and Ramesh Ramanathan do not wish to be the only funders for Janaagraha out of any sense of egotism or self-promotion, the concern was that until the idea of Janaagraha is well-established, there will be unnecessary distractions about the funding. It was precisely to avoid this that offers to support were declined.

c) The latest book titled, "Participatory Planning – A citizens' guide" is being priced and will be sold through bookstores at a subsidised price of Rs. 80/-. (English and Kannada)

**For Janaagraha
Col. RUDRA**

Administrative Coordinator

Janaagraha refutes charges

BANGALORE, Oct 30, Janaagraha, people's movement in the City, has "never ever tried to undermine the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike or its corporators," Janaagraha Coordinator Swathi Ramanathan said today.

In response to queries over certain allegations made by some Corporators in the BMP meeting on Wednesday Ms Ramathan said "we have always tried to strengthen the body (BMP) and engage the citizens in its administration."

On the allegation that some advertisements by Janaagraha shows it taking the credit for the works done by the BMP, she denied it and said "Nowhere have we said that we have done BMP's works or its budget." She sought to 'categorically' make it clear that "the entire works of Janaagraha is funded by the Ramanathan Foundation."

(DECCAN HERALD, FRIDAY, OCT 31, 2003)

'We thank our area corporator and MLA'

By G. Anuradha

Bangalore, Nov. 22: What Majestic is to the centre of Bangalore and Shivajinagar to the East of the city, Jayanagar fourth block is to Bangalore South. A hub of commercial activity, the area spread around the Jayanagar shopping complex, has a proactive residents' welfare association dealing with not just the residential problems but also with projects of public convenience.

Established in 1982, the achievements of Jayanagar fourth block residents welfare association are many. The effect of their achievements is seen not only at the main bus stand opposite the shopping complex providing the comfortable space that commuters look for, but also in the restoration and development of huge parks in the area.

The struggle, however, has not been easy. For, the association constituting 300 life members had to take the legal recourse to get the area for the parks between the 7th and 8th main and 34th and 35th cross, restored. Their struggle was equally tough for the restoration and widening of the road near the Jayanagar 4th block bus stand. "We have to acknowledge the help provided by the area corporator Mr Nagaraj and also minister for food and

THE ASIAN AGE
Sunday, Nov 23, 2003

civil supplies Ramalinga Reddy who showed keen interest in the development of the area, which is part of his constituency,"

Rightfully
YOURS

procure the land for the bus stand, which was previously a burial ground. Not stopping at getting a drinking water tank

traffic lines in the area.

What is perhaps unique about this association is that it conducts periodical educational programmes on interesting and citizen-friendly topics like safety in using gas stoves and pressure cookers, in addition to getting the residents together for cultural activities. "Our office bearers are in constant touch with the civic bodies to represent the problems of the residents," Mr. Murthy explains. Problems however, continue to abound in the form of complaints about the stray dog nuisance. "We want the BCC to take steps to contain this problem immediately," strongly avers association secretary N. Keshava Kumar. Another matter of concern, as the office bearers point out, is the total violation of building laws by some house owners in the area. Haphazard parking of vehicles and allotment of the playground opposite the Jayanagar telephone exchange for sale of crackers, causes a great deal of inconvenience to the people living around the playground, the members point out. The residents of the area who have already had to contend with the main shopping complex, want a total ban on the issuance of new licences for restaurants in the adjoining residential areas.

Janaagraha, the much-acclaimed citizens movement, began over a year ago with the objective of involving residents' associations in the development of their respective areas, it now has a database of more than 250 associations. Mr. Ramesh Ramanathan, who founded Janaagraha in December, 2001 says citizens associations in the city are becoming sensitive to the issues of the urban poor in their areas.

Mr. Ramanathan says that resident's associations are now going beyond addressing local issues and problems. The awareness about bettering the environment of the entire ward by involving the respective administrative unit and corporators is catching on, he adds. Mr. Ramanathan also says. "In the last year, rather than aiming at the outcome, the associations are concentrating on the process that could bring them closer to their goals."

As Janaagraha comes of age, the Bangalore Age takes a look of how resident's associations in the city have been able to work to solve the common man's problems in a weekly series.

says president of the association K.V. Bhaskar Murthy.

According to him, it was the active participation of the association which helped

constructed with the help of the Vinayaka temple management, the association has managed to get a donor to donate paint boxes to the traffic police for drawing

Assns split on charges against Janaagraha

BANGALORE, Nov 8, The allegations made against Janaagraha by the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP) Council members recently have received a mixed response from the Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) in the City. While some of them accused the civic platform of "using money power" and creating a divide among the RWAs and between them and the Corporators, others expressed solidarity with Janaagraha.

Members of Cox Town Residents' Association, Grahaka Shakti and Jana

Vedike staged a demonstration in support of Janaagraha. These organisations said that Janaagraha was working towards creating awareness among the people about civic issues and was not infringing the administrative powers of the BMP Council.

While expressing their "disappointment" with Janaagraha, six resident welfare associations presented a questionnaire to reporters here today. The list also included allegations against the founder and coordinator of Janaagraha

Ramesh Ramanathan on several accounts. It also questioned the credibility of the organisation and the source of its funding.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr G V R Reddy, Chief Coordinator, Awareness, Koramangala Residents Association, said Janaagraha has not succeeded in getting any of its programmes accepted by BMP or corporators, which proved that It has failed to "effect proper citizen participation in civic issues."

RESPONSE TO PRESS REPORTS

THE TIMES OF INDIA : CONVERSATIONS WITH READERS

Janaagraha Zindabad!

I was shocked to learn that BCC members, led by K. Chandrashekar, approved a council resolution terming Janaagraha "an illegal institution". All that Janaagraha is doing is asking people to change the present system to a "participative democracy" — a system in which citizens regularly interact with their corporators and BCC staff, discuss their needs and take active part in all the civic works in their area. In many wards, we have successfully implemented this system. We have been reviewing the progress/deficiencies of ward works every month with the BCC staff, and the corporators also attend such meetings whenever they are free. This system is working so well now that citizens have even begun to prepare the local budgets and get them approved by the respective corporators.

- **S.R. Venkataram**
Bangalore

II

I thought that Ramesh Ramanathan and Swati of Janaagraha had landed like angels from some other planet to conquer the hearts of Bangaloreans. Why else would they work late hours to improve the city, spending millions? Transparency in public works is the need of the hour and Janaagraha is wedded to this. I hope the chief minister and the commissioner will come forward to support Janaagraha and all the other voluntary organisations working for the betterment of the city.

- **T. Vidyadhar**
Bangalore

III

For the first time in our lives, I and many of my fellow-citizens are beginning to feel part of the political system. For the First time we feel that we have a role, other than voting every Five years, to play in the development of our ward, our city. It is time Mr Chandrasekhar and his ilk realised that they have no

business denying us our rights.

- **Arun Kumar**
Bangalore

THE TIMES OF INDIA
FRIDAY, OCT 31, 2003

IV

The world over, it has been accepted that building this kind of 'social capital' through community involvement is vital for economic development. Our corporators should support endeavours such as Janaagraha's, not slam them.

- **Ravee Nerur**
Bangalore

V

The angry reaction to the excellent work being done by Janaagraha is quite understandable. For years our honourable corporators have been used to spending crores of rupees of public money on non-existent projects. Now they are, for the First time, being asked how this money is being spent? Naturally, they hate it.

- **Nirad Muthanna**
Bangalore

THE TIMES OF INDIA
SATURDAY, NOV 1, 2003



DECCAN HERALD

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Janaagraha

Sir, I am concerned over former Bangalore Mayor K Chandrashekar's needless outburst against Janaagraha. Could this be the first salvo of an organised campaign to scuttle citizens' initiatives? Although not a Janaagraha member, I have some knowledge about the initiative and its activities through interactions with those who are associated with it.

At no point was I given the impression that Janaagraha is an alternative to the BMP or the corporators. On the contrary Janaagraha activists had advocated people's participation in identifying problems in my ward and alerting the corporator so that he gets adequate input.

Is it because Janaagraha advocates transparency that corporators, cutting across party lines, attack it? For the first time in our lives, we are beginning to feel as if we are part of the political system. For the first time we feel that we have a role to play other than voting every five years.

Why are the corporators so keen on denying us our rights? Why don't the corporators consult the people of the ward before taking any initiative? Does Chandrashekar and others think that we are just voting machines? We have every right to demand that our corporator meet our requirements.

We have every right to demand transparency in all financial deals. We have every right to know what is being spent where. Janaagraha just offers a much-needed platform for us.

- **ARUNKUMAR, Bangalore**

SATURDAY, NOV 1, 2003

CITIZEN'S PLATFORM

Sir,

We have unanimously passed the following resolution regarding the recent BMP meeting.

"Janaagraha is a citizens need, to engage with their governments, and to get better governance. It is a platform intended for citizens to help themselves. One of the Janaagraha campaigns is exclusively for the Urban Poor in Bangalore.

Over 5,000 volunteers have given their time and expertise in various forms to support the work of Janaagraha. These volunteers include members from the different Citizens Welfare Associations.

We understand that certain allegations were made the functioning of the Janaagraha Campaign Coordinators- Mr. Ramesh Ramanathan and Mrs. Swathi Ramanathan in the BMP Council Meeting which is purely by the vested interest of some Council members.

We strongly condemn it and inform that such type of negative interests will not be tolerated by citizens in Bangalore and Karnataka State. The Hon. Chief Minister of Karnataka and the Commissioner of BMP should not encourage such forces, in the interest of citizens participation in local governance."

- **G. Ramamoorthy, Coordinating committee of Residents Welfare Associations of Indiranagar**