

ANNUAL REPORT
1 APRIL 2012 to 31 MARCH 2013



SPARROW

Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women

If the Roof Leaks, Let it Leak...

Poems and Stories of Women in
Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Maithili, Santhali and Dogri



Edited by
Menka Shivdasani

IF THE ROOF LEAKS, LET IT LEAK...is the fourth of five volumes planned, with 87 writers from 23 languages of India. Three of them, *Hot is the Moon*, *Being Carried Far Away* and *Sweeping The Front yard* were published earlier. This volume contains selected works and interviews of writers from Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Maithily, Santhali and Dogri

HINDI writers include: Anamika, Mrinal Pande, Maithreyi Pushpa, Neelesh Ranguhuvanshi. PUNJABI writers include: Sukhwant Kaur Mann, Simrat Gagan, Nirupama Dutt, Manjit Tiwana and Deepinder. SINDHI writers include: Indira Shabnam and Popati Hiranandani. SANTHALI writer include: Nirmala Putul. MAITHILY writer include: Shefalika Verma. DOGRI writers include: Shakuntala Sharma, Kanta Jamwal.

The editor of the volume is Menka Shivdasani. Bharati Kapadia's drawings will be used in this volume also.

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Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women

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ANNUAL REPORT
1 April 2012-31 March 2013

PREFACE

The year (1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013) began with the usual happy anticipation of continuing our archival projects. The previous year had ended well with the completion of the project on women scientists and the finalisation and submission of all the accounts. Two e-books had been beautifully designed and now what lay ahead of us was the fourth volume of the series on 87 women writers from 23 languages and all other exciting but time-consuming activities of the archives.

Many important events took place in the country in this period. For those of us interested in women's history it was a year when we lost many important women who have contributed to history and our lives. Dr Leela Dube, the feminist anthropologist, the veteran Socialist leader Mrinal Gore, Captain Lakshmi Sehgal, a freedom fighter who continued her efforts to work for the nation, Shafeeq Fatima Shehra, well-known and much admired Urdu writer, Aban Mistry, a tabla maestro and a scholar, all of them left us bereft but we have their lives before us to take us further.

Some men in the cinema world like Rajesh Khanna, Yash Chopra, Dara Singh and Jaspal Bhatti also passed away this year. Shiv Sena lost its leader Bal Thackeray.

There were the usual scams and corruption charges amidst which India on April 19 2012, test-fired for the first time its most-ambitious strategic missile, the over 5,000-km range Agni-V. With this India made a bid to join the most exclusive ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) club whose members are at present the US, Russia, China, France and UK. In July 2012 violence broke out between indigenous Bodos and Bengali speaking Muslims in Assam's Bodoland area. 77 people were killed and over 400,000 people were displaced following which there was a huge exodus of North-eastern people from Bangalore and other southern cities. It took a while to bring things back to normalcy. The cyclone Nilam hit the north Tamil Nadu coast on 31st October causing havoc. The Thane cyclone the previous year had similarly disrupted everyday life. This was a second attack of nature on Tamil Nadu. A quiet inter-caste marriage took place between Divya, a Vanniyar girl and Ilavarasan, a Dalit boy in October 2012, in Tamil Nadu. The consequences of this marriage were more terrible to bear than a natural disaster like a cyclone. Divya's father Nagraj committed suicide and his death led to hundreds of men, Vanniyars and other castes going on a rampage against the Dalits in the area, setting ablaze Dalit houses and demolishing entire colonies of Dalits in the Dalit colony of Natham and Kondampatti. Soon violent actions against Dalits began to spread in other areas. Divya and Ilavarasan became household words and



their decision to marry generated heated debates on caste and became a political issue. The inter-caste marriage issue involving the lives of these two persons has not been resolved in the period covered in this report. The 26/11 events were sealed with the hanging of Ajmal Kasab on 21st November.

The one event that became the symbol of the status of women in India and their citizenship, which shook the nation, was the most gruesome gang rape in recent times which triggered off violent protests in the Indian capital and all over the nation, which took place on 16 December 2012, in New Delhi. The national uproar in the aftermath of the Delhi gang rape forced the Indian government to consider calls for reform of the country's judicial system. What are termed fast-track courts were set up as provisional measures to deal with sexual assault cases in the capital. The first special court to handle crimes against women was set up in West Bengal. The court is to be staffed entirely by women. Another significant gesture on the part of the government was the setting up of a special committee to make suggestions to strengthen criminal laws dealing with sexual assault against women. But there is no denying that a lot of work to empower women and improve their conditions is being done at the grassroots level which SPARROW has found out in its interviews with women in NGOs all over India.

A party was formed for the common person called the Aam Aadmi Party by Arvind Kejriwal on 26 November 2012. Wish he could have been a little more gender sensitive and called it Aam Vyakthi Party.

National events whether it is price rise or a tragedy like the gang rape in Delhi, leave their impact on organisations concerned with women and their life. The Delhi gang rape gave us the reason to think deeply about violence and women and the nation and efforts began to bring out an exclusive SPARROW Newsletter dealing with the topic of violence and women. We learnt a lot in the process and despite the abrupt ending of support from The Flowering Tree Inc. we managed to keep our heads above water.

C S Lakshmi, Mumbai 2013



POLICY DECISIONS, STAFF STRUCTURE AND TEAM SPIRIT

SPARROW in its functioning all these years has been very particular about taking up projects and executing them in the best possible manner despite the usual hurdles of fund crunch and related hurdles. This year too we managed to do it for just when things began to look bad due to the withdrawal of support from the Flowering Tree Inc., we got a small two-year grant from The Global Fund for Women at the end of July 2012 that took care of part of the infrastructural expenses. While we were still struggling to cover the rest of the expenses and also continue our projects, Stichting de Zaaier, Utrecht, our eternal saviour whenever we are in distress, bailed us out with a small grant for two years after completion of their earlier project that ended in May 2012.

The SPARROW team stood steadfast by us but some serious measures had to be taken with regard to funds and sustenance. We continued our individual fund raising efforts with more vigour and also sought appointments with charitable institutions and individuals in Mumbai and elsewhere to present our work and seek support.

PROJECT AND ARCHIVAL ACTIVITIES

The project funded for two years by Stichting de Zaaier entitled **Lived Lives and Spoken Words** which covers in a small way the different areas of work of SPARROW, had begun in June 2010. It ended on 31st May 2012. From 1st April 2012 to 31st May 2012, we continued to do the archive-based work involving the regular archiving work of processing of transcriptions, translations and filing of interviews done and augmenting the existing collection of print and visual material. We also continued our networking activities with screenings and workshops.

We also began research work to prepare to interview important NGOs in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka. Hengasara Hakkinna Sangha (HHS) meaning Women's Rights Organisation, is a feminist, activist women's rights organisation based in Bangalore which sees itself as a part of the larger women's movement in India. Two other organisations in Karnataka, Sakhi and Sanchaya Nele were also part of our NGO documentation work and oral history projects. Sanchaya Nele, meaning Support Space, is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation working for the social and economic development of marginalised rural communities, particularly Dalits, women and children. Sanchaya Nele works for the socio-economic empowerment and development of women by promoting their participation in decision making processes and facilitating their leadership at various levels and is in Anekal taluk in Karnataka. We were aware of the work being done by Sanchaya Nele headed by P Yashodha, and we began to put together material for the documentation and prepare the ground for the oral history documentation. Sakhi, based in Hospet, actively



works to alleviate the problems of the rural poor and Dalit girls who want to be educated. MASUM and NAVAM are Pune based. NAVAM is a non-profit, autonomous, non-sectarian philanthropic organisation. They have established partnerships with several NGOs and are doing meaningful work with rural communities in Maharashtra. MASUM (Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal) has been functioning for many years and has several programmes on women's rights and rights of children. Navsarjan, based in Ahmedabad, is a grassroots Dalit organisation dedicated to ensuring human rights for all. Their mission is to eliminate discrimination based on untouchability practices; ensure equality of status and opportunities for all, regardless of caste, class or gender; and to ensure the rule of law. SPARROW planned to document life stories and work of Usha B N, Dr Bhagyalakshmi, P Yashodha, Nirmala Pandit, Dr Manisha Gupte and Dr Manjula Pradeep, the main functionaries of these organisations, and also other women associated with these organisations.

Research work had been done earlier to interview folk artistes in the Salem district, Tamil Nadu. This year travel plans were worked out to meet many of them and record their life stories and their work. Du Saraswathi, and B T Jahnavi, two Dalit writers, both based in Karnataka, were also included in the ongoing list of writers we continue to interview and plans were worked out to fix appointments with them to document their writing and life. For *The Flowering Tree*, we had taken up the task of sorting out, transcribing and translating the oral histories we had done of traditional women healers. The interviews done with Dakshayani, the traditional bone-setter from Tamil Nadu, Pammu Hengsu, the birth-attendant from Karnataka, Parvathamma who practised as a traditional doctor from Karnataka and Pi Rothangi, a traditional (religious) healer from Mizoram were transcribed, translated and filed.

Under our publication project, a double newsletter No. 25 and 26 (May-July 2012), covering the Dalit Writers meet at Pondicherry was brought out under the De Zaaier project. Entitled **Voices from Silence**, it was a newsletter we thoroughly enjoyed working on. The Coral Jasmine Special Issue Newsletter on traditional healers, a special issue covering the life and work of traditional practitioners of medicine was brought out as a part of *The Flowering Tree* project with excerpts from the interviews done with women healers. The e-books **A Random Harvest**, which is a collection of sketches and drawings of women



painters and **Making Faces: Painted Posters for Films**, a book of hand-painted film posters, are currently with the e-book publisher.

The other publication work under this project was working on the fourth volume in the series of 87 writers from 23 languages which had gone several steps further last year and was on the way to the printer but had got delayed due to several reasons. The languages included in this volume are Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Maithily, Santhali and Dogri. Some of the transcripts needed to be redone as the first transcripts seemed to have several flaws. Editing, consultation with the writers, rechecking the translations took much longer than usual as some of the languages did not have experts in Mumbai. This volume entitled *If the Roof Leaks, Let it Leak...* is being edited by the well-known poet, Menka Shivdasani, who is meticulously going through the manuscript. The designing of the book is complete and only the final phase of sending it to the printer has to be taken care of. This volume has taken more than two years to be put in proper shape. It has been hard work but we feel that all the hard work would be worth it when we see the book in print.

Last year we experienced the joy of completing a book on women scientists entitled *The Balancing Act: Stories of Women in Science*. It was a learning experience to say the least for not only did we get to meet some of the best known scientists in India, but we also got to understand the ways in which women engage with science. The beautifully designed book was much appreciated by the scientists but the Department of Science and Technology which had commissioned the book was silent. Hence it came as a pleasant surprise to know that the book was released on a formal occasion in Delhi in January 2013.

SPARROW EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

The most exciting event this year was the Dalit Women Writers Meet for which we had planned last year. It was scheduled to be from April 19th 2012 to 23rd April 2012. It was a Meet to explore self and expression through a series of dialogues, readings and chats. The Meet was an attempt to reclaim some voices from silence. The idea of having a Dalit Women Writers' Meet took place because there was a great need for exploring self and expression from a gender and caste perspective. We felt that it would be interesting to set this meeting in the context of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's writings which centred on gender and caste issues. The Sahitya



Akademi supported this Meet partly. It was held in the beautiful Adishakti campus at Pondicherry.

We returned from Pondicherry to prepare for a two-day workshop with students from Virginia Commonwealth University on 23rd and 24th May 2012. Dr Archana A Pathak, Assistant Professor, Department of Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies along with her colleague Prof. Liz Canfield brought 10 of her students to India for a study abroad class. They were very keen on visiting SPARROW to learn about social justice from a non-US perspective. We conducted a two-day workshop for the students covering a range of issues concerning women through films and reading sessions. There was an interactive session where they learnt a lot about different cultures which gave them time to absorb different aspects and issues of a culture different from theirs.



Whenever one of our books gets released we feel a great sense of satisfaction in the work we do. In September 2012, we had the occasion to feel this way once more. *Sweeping the Front Yard*, an anthology of women writers published by SPARROW, was launched at Kitab Khana, Fort, on 28th September, 2012. This is the third in a series of five volumes to be published by SPARROW with the support of Prince Claus Fund. This volume contains selected works of writers from Malyalam, Urdu, Telugu and English, along with interviews of the writers.

The launch took place at a function of poetry reading titled *Poets for Peace: Women's Voices*, a chapter of a global movement called 100 Thousand Poets for Change curated by poet Menka Shivdasani.

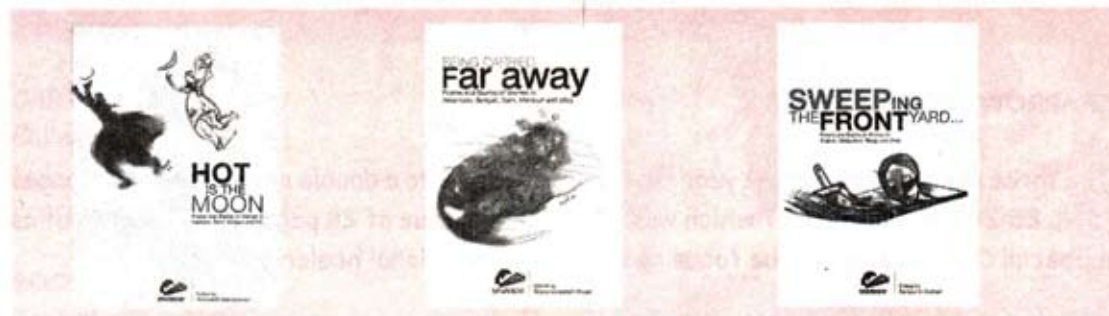
Dr C S Lakshmi, Director of SPARROW spoke a few words about working on the book. Dr Vrinda Nabar, noted writer and



former Chair of English at the University of Bombay, released the book. The editor, Sampurna Chatterji, gave a talk on her experiences of editing the volume. Anitha Thampi, one of the Malayalam writers included in the anthology, read her poems.

The North Indian Languages Board of Sahitya Akademi held an interesting seminar on what should be termed a classic, from 1st October 2012 to 4th October 2012 at Udaipur. It was a seminar which wanted to redefine classics in ways that allows modern Indian literature to evolve its own yardsticks and also to create a space for categories which would not be admitted within traditional definitions, e.g., oral literatures, expressions of folklores and the literatures of marginalized voices etc. Writers were invited from each of the 22 Government of India list and English, to take part in the seminar. Dr C S Lakshmi attended the seminar and spoke about the need to include old journals in Tamil edited by women and journals edited by men for women and autobiographies and biographies of women as modern day classics.

In January 2013 came the Jaipur Literature Festival held from 24th to 28th January and this time it provided the opportunity to Dr C S Lakshmi to carry the SPARROW publications and introduce the SPARROW volumes of translated works and interviews of writers to a large audience.



Under our Screening and Networking Programme this year, apart from meeting many individuals and introducing them to the work of SPARROW, there was one screening organised which we consider a special one. SPARROW does receive requests from groups and colleges to screen films produced by SPARROW. This year the Jyeshtha Nagarik Mitra Parivar, a group of senior citizens who like to stay connected with issues, especially women issues, requested that we screen a film for them. It was, for us, a special request for it was good to know that a group of senior citizens wanted to be kept informed about women's issues. On March 29, 2013 SPARROW's film on Vithabhai, a tamasha artiste, was screened for this group. It was well received and a good discussion followed the screening.



SPARROW COLLECTIONS AND WORK RECORD
1 April 2011-31 March 2012



SNL 25-26



SNL 27

SPARROW NEWSLETTERS

The three newsletters for the year have been divided into a double newsletter of 24 pages (SNL 25-26). Newsletter 27 which was also a double issue of 28 pages was brought out as a Special Coral Jasmine issue focusing on women traditional healers.

WEBSITE POSTINGS

There were regular website updates with postings on projects, SPARROW Newsletters, Annual Reports, Interviews, Events, and information for supporting SPARROW.

SPARROW COLLECTIONS

The rest of the collection acquired and work done during the period is shown in the table below:



PHOTOGRAPHS

Total Photographs received	181
Filed original photographs	113
Processed and Data Entry	98
Data Entry Completed (Backlog)	458
Processed and Digitized	669

FILMS

Documentary Films

DVD

English	6
Tamil	1
Hindi	1
Marathi	1

Processed and digitized	9
Edited Entries	9

CARTOONS

Collected	57
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Processed and digitized	57
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BOOKS

English	21
Hindi	8
Marathi	9
Tamil	15
Gujarati	1
Bengali	3
Kannada	1
Telugu	2
Dogri	2

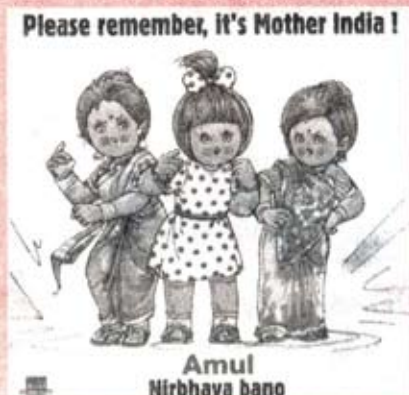
Total	62
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SPARROW COLLECTIONS

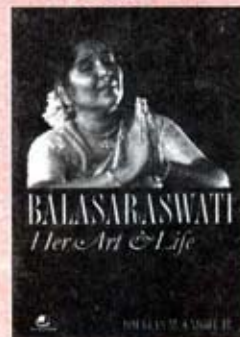


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CARTOON



BOOKS



Processed and digitized (Backlog)	62
Edited (Backlog)	742
REFERENCE BOOKS	
English	16
Hindi	1
Processed and digitized	17
ADVERTISEMENTS	
English	177
Total	177
PRINT VISUALS	
English	90
Hindi	12
Marathi	18
Total	120
Processed and digitized	120
POSTERS	
English	1
Hindi	3
Tamil	1
BROCHURES	
English	17
Processed and digitized	17
NEWSLETTERS	
English	16
Marathi	11
Processed and digitized	27

SPARROW COLLECTIONS



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

English	1075
Marathi	472
Hindi	44
Gujarati	1
Total	1592

Processed and digitized 1592

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES (Backlog)

Old Entries	1806
New Entries	1398

Processed and digitised 3204

JOURNAL ARTICLES

English	55
Tamil	05
Marathi	13
Kannada	08
Hindi	01
Total	82

Processed and digitized (Backlog) 82

JOURNAL ARTICLES (Backlog)

Processed and digitised 1094

AUDIO CASSETTES / CDS

Hindi	02
Sanskrit	01
Total	03

Processed and digitized 03

SPARROW Collections

The girl who fought back

Min Arora | 1986



New Delhi: The moment she stepped out of the court on Thursday, Laxmi Bhand had herself surrounded by countless cameras and requests for interviews, which she graciously granted between long hugs from friends and well-wishers.

"I wouldn't speak to the media earlier. I was afraid that I'd just end up as a story to be forgotten. But now I'm really happy with how this has progressed. This has encouraged me to take the issue up as strongly as I can for the next hearing," says Laxmi, who lives with her mother and brother in Chharlebad.

The interim directions on acid sale regulation from the Supreme Court came following a PIL she filed back in 2005. It has been a seven-year-long struggle, and it isn't quite over yet.

It all began when she was 15 and was on her way to a bookstore in central Delhi, when a man, whose address she had memorised, caught her by the ear and with an accomplice, splashed acid on her face. At an age when most teenagers are busy juggling school and extracurricular activities, she was relegated to bed, doing the rounds of doctors and hospitals.

That, however, did not deter her from taking the aggressors to court. The main accusation finally got 10 years in jail in 2009. Her father, who was a truck, passed away last year.

She has been trying to get a job since then. But there were many hurdles in the way. "I approached a BPO. But they wanted someone who had at least completed school. I had to put my studies on hold after the attack. I'm yet to complete class XII exams," says the 25-year-old. "I also tried getting a job as a beautician. I had joined a training course too. But they want people who look good for a job like that," says Laxmi, who went through seven surgeries between 2005 and 2006. The rest of the time, the 10-hour, was taken by her father's further expenses. She still has three surgeries pending, before she can go in for cosmetic surgery.

"The three lakh rupee compensation that the court has announced is very little for an acid attack survivor. It can only cover the first couple of surgeries. It would've been better if there was a provision to cover the entire treatment's cost," she says, referring to the SC directive.

The acid attack survivor is still gasping but feeling about the SC's interim directions. After thinking a while, she says, "The survivor is going to be thankful."

25-year-old acid attack victim from Delhi dies in city



LATA MANGESHKAR
CHALA VAHI DES MEL RA BHADJANS



चालां वाही देस
मीरा मंगेशकर • मराठी लता मंगेशकर
गीत - सुखदेव मीराकर

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**INTERVIEWS TAKEN**

Marathi	1
Total digital recordings	1

**INTERVIEWS TRANSCRIBED, DTP, EDITED
AND TRANSLATED**

English	14
Marathi	2
Hindi	3
Tamil	1
Kannada	3
Total	23

SOME REFLECTIONS

When we look back on this year, it seems like a year of mixed emotions. There was the joy of a successfully completed writers' meet and there were the other events of book release and workshops which kept us busy and also happy. But there was also the gloom of abrupt ending of a project which not only took away funding we depended on but also caused a lot of mental agony. What kept us going were small grants which brought great joy. We did not have enough funding but the work we were doing was exciting enough to bring us out of depression. We were getting to know women who had faced great odds in life but had not given up hope. These were women from various walks of life from the rural and urban areas who persisted in doing whatever they believed in. Often during lunch hour we would talk of a person whose interview we were transcribing or translating and share her struggles and discuss how she made her life meaningful and after that we could feel our anxieties melting away. We would gear up for whatever lay in the future and tell one another that we cannot lose heart.

We began to work on a special issue of our newsletter focussing on violence and while violence and women as an issue dominated our conversation, there was always a song, a poem or a story that would still give us courage and hope. We continued to post regular communications on our Facebook page and worked on the poems and stories of the fourth volume with the usual vigour. The title we chose for the fourth volume, *If the Roof Leaks, Let it Leak...* in a way reflected our own state of mind. We were ready to brave it all and



1 April 2012 TO 31 March 2013

also work hard to reach our various ambitious goals. While we were aware of the dark clouds we could also see the silver linings for we were soon going to enter our Silver Jubilee Year. Dark clouds can be gloomy but they can also bring much needed rain and along with the rains can come colourful rainbows. And whatever the weather, sparrows don't become extinct; they have a way of surviving.



Despite many hurdles and literally swimming against the current SPARROW will be entering its 25 year this year with the support of well-wishers and friends. We thank all our funders, donors, supporters, well-wishers, friends and many more who have supported us in many ways.

Gayathri Reddy

J.M. Girija Devi

P. Ravi Kumar

Vasundhara Prakashan Pvt Ltd

Motilal Nehru College

S.V. Subramaniam

Sivasankari Chandrasekaran

Charities

Virginia Commonwealth

University

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Anna Philips

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The Hindu

Shahidha

Manju Bansal

Urmila Pawar

Dr. Nitin Malkan

(Akshar Eye Clinic)

Afeefa Banu

Mohammad Abdul Quayyam

Ravindran Sriramachandran

Vijaya Dass

Anand Raghav

Usha Thakkar

Vidya K.S.

T. Sumathy

R. Thyagarajan

C.S.Lakshmi

Kalpna (C. RamaKrishna)

MR.AR. Educational Society

L.S. Saraswathi (Srinivasan

Rajambal Ramanan Trust)

Suryanarayan Venkateswaran

Parikshit Mahajan

Seena Praveen

Divya Pandey

Ranjana Vijay Dave

P.S. Arora

Meenakshi Shedde

Mithra Venkatraj

Satish Vishwanathan

Anita Balasubramanian

P. Sathyavathi

Gujarat Research Society

Geraldine Forbes

Singh Foundation

Kamini Dandapani

Sriskanthadas

While we were aware of the dark clouds we could also see the silver linings for we were soon going to enter our Silver Jubilee Year. Dark clouds can be gloomy but they can also bring much needed rain and along with the rains can come colourful rainbows. And whatever the weather, sparrows don't become extinct; they have a way of surviving.

