

Parimal Nathwani— A Multi-Faceted Man

Indian ministers are made differently. However, one particular Member of Parliament does stand out like a lotus in the political dirt. And he is none other than Parimal Nathwani, a Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand. He has risen from the ashes to come out strong and to help others from what he has learnt and experienced in life. He has adopted Islamnagar and literally transformed the lives of its most poor residents in the city of Ranchi.

Who is this new, unknown star?

Born in Mumbai, Mr. Parimal Dhirajbhai Nathwani completed his graduation from Mumbai and got his doctorate in management from National Institute of Management. Soon after finishing studies, he joined the bleaching department of New Era Mills. After a short stint here, Mr Nathwani turned an entrepreneur by starting a soap agency in Mumbai, and started a partnership business for manufacturing and marketing bath soap. But, the soap business turned out to be all but froth. Next came a switch to the stock markets. Hoping to ride the bulls, Nathwani was done in by the bears during the Harshad Mehta scam in early 1990s. Doomed and depressed, his faith in God helped him rise like a phoenix.

A chance meeting with Dhirubhai Ambani and his son Mukesh Ambani in 1995 changed his life. The father of India's capital markets took Nathwani under his wings at a time when Reliance was planning the country's largest green field refinery at Moti Khavdi in Jamnagar. The rest as they say was history. In March 2008, Mr Nathwani won the Rajya Sabha election as an independent candidate from Jharkhand. Although an alien to the region, Mr Nathwani perhaps is the first and the only Rajya Sabha MP to keep his promise and open an office in the region. He has used his MPLAD funds for creating village infrastructure in tribal areas of Jharkhand. Besides government funds, he also contributes in his own way for various charitable and public welfare activities. Mr Nathwani has created

drinking water and sanitation facilities for Islamnagar, a slum in the heart of Ranchi town and made the area worth living. He has promised to rebuild a hospital run by Ranchi Municipal Corporation from his own fund.

Welfare activities have always been close to Mr Nathwani's heart. When the killer earthquake wreaked havoc in January 2001, Mr Nathwani was one of the few outsiders to reach Kutch. For 45 days on a trot, he focused on rescue, relief and rehabilitation work, while supervising medical camps and construction of earthquake-resistant buildings of several government agencies across Kutch. He also stood like a rock behind residents of Jamnagar and surrounding villages during the June 1998 cyclone.

Mr Nathwani arranged for generator-sets ensuring uninterrupted power supply to government hospitals of Jamnagar and Jam Khambhalia, besides helping organise medical services and distribution of relief material, food grains and food packets in affected areas of Jamnagar. Mr Nathwani also proved to the world how a unique synergy between the government and a RRDT NGO could meaningfully reshape the rural scenario for the better. He reached out to 5,558 villages of Gujarat and has created facilities like roads, panchayat offices, community-halls, anganwadis (pre-nursery schools), check-dams, etc. in a span of about eight years.

Mr Nathwani, who often took up causes and issues of Jamnagar and Saurashtra on bigger platforms during his days in Jam Khambhalia, worked in close association with other veteran political leaders. Mr Nathwani is synonymous with human relations. The kind of contacts and relationships he has built across various sections of society; from poor villagers to political leaders, from clerks to commissioners, from a layman to lawyers, from Jamnagar to Jharkhand and Dwaraka to Delhi; is not something that can be

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Islamnagar after demolition



Islamnagar before demolition

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achieved overnight. It is a result of concentrated efforts with commitment, sincerity and mutual trust.

From 2009 onwards, Islamnagar was adopted by Parimal Nathwani who set up water-tanks and drinking water supplies, bore wells, community toilets; cleansed the drainage and heaps of dirt and constructed a children's playground. "I don't know why but I developed a very close bond with Islamnagar. I would often visit the place and spend time with children and youth there," says Nathwani, who is visibly upset at the government's mindless demolition drive in the name of High Court's order. Nathwani had many more plans to uplift the living-standards of the people of Islamnagar and he kept the volunteers of HOP—an NGO patronised by him—on toes to come up with welfare schemes for Islamnagar.

Islamnagar, one of the oldest settlements in Ranchi, is embroiled in a bitter game of political egos and rights of those who have no voice in the democracy. In the land of mineral rich Jharkhand, the poor are becoming targets of the anti-encroachment drives, without any compensation or rehabilitation. While big sharks continue to usurp land and build fancy hotels, banquet centres or plush malls, the poor are being evicted mercilessly under the current government.

This is a gross violation of the UN's basic principles and guidelines on development based evictions and displacement. By not informing the affected parties and denying them a chance to seek a reprieve. The guidelines aim to minimise displacement and call for alternative solutions. Comprehensive eviction-impact assessments are to be carried out beforehand. And compensation and rehabilitation packages must be consistent with human rights standards.

Mr Nathwani has bright visions for the future of Jharkhand. The vision of Jharkhand in 2020. Independent and uninterrupted power supply to all. "It is indeed sad to know from 32,615 villages, 55 per cent of them do not have access to proper electricity." Mr Nathwani has also been pushing the Jharkhand government for projects, such as, irrigation, curbing illegal mining, upgradation of infrastructure, biodiversity conservation, educational infrastructure, civic amenities, proper management of funds for welfare schemes, forest conservation and so on.

For more, log onto:
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