

# MEET OUR FELLOWS



AN INTRODUCTION TO ASHOKA FELLOWS WORKING ON  
TRANSFORMING RURAL INDIA THROUGH THEIR  
SYSTEM-CHANGING IDEAS AND INSIGHTS

## Ashif Shaikh

Ashif is building a national movement to abolish the unconstitutional caste hierarchy in India. He is enabling victims to lead the change, by taking them through an internal journey from victimhood to leadership and building four pillars of support around them to facilitate this journey. The four pillars include a network of lawyers that provide pro-bono support to those fighting cases against atrocities they have faced, new laws that protect the rights of the Dalits, Sufi saint groups who preach equality and harmony amongst the castes in their performances, and alternate livelihood opportunities to those renouncing inhumane jobs like manual scavenging and bonded labour.

<https://jansahasindia.org/>

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## Biplab Paul

Biplab Paul has come up with a cost-effective and affordable solution to water scarcity that provides a reliable system of irrigation. Biplab's approach improves the lives of the rural poor through a unique participatory irrigation system based on rainwater harvesting. Through his organization, Naireeta Services Private Limited, Biplab empowers rural women to contribute to agriculture and to restore the biodiversity of the region.

<https://www.naireetaservices.com/>

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## Gopi Gopalakrishnan

Gopi is a pioneer in unlocking the potential of existing informal healthcare providers to respond to the healthcare needs of underserved populations. His innovative social franchising and social marketing model combines the resources and strengths of the rural private and public sector to create a low cost-effective model for healthcare in rural areas.

<http://worldhealthpartners.org/>

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## Krishna Mishra

Krishna Mishra is changing Indian farmer's quality of life by turning farming into a modern profitable livelihood opportunity. Seeing farmers as entrepreneurs who are operating in complex systems and are exposed to various risks—financial, institutional, market, and household—Mishra has built a personalized portfolio management system that holistically assesses risks and caters to the needs of farmers.

<http://www.ekutirsb.com/>

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## Neelkanth Mishra

Neelkanth is linking fragmented components, farmer groups, government schemes, fishery research institutes, and the market to unleash the full potential of the fish and water plant farming industry. Through this work, he is creating livelihoods for tribal communities across India. He is also creating policy-level changes to enable other organizations and local bodies to take up Indian fisheries as a livelihoods opportunity.

<https://www.jaljееvika.org/>

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## Pradip Sarmah

By using veterinarians to restructure the economics of small-scale animal husbandry, Dr. Pradip Sarmah is opening a new field of rural development in northeast India. He also creates sustainable livelihoods for poor families in North East India by using local resources and focusing on skills development. The Rickshaw Bank helps rickshaw pullers to become self-employed through a unique revenue generation and credit scheme. This benefits people who are often landless labourers, youth, and small traders who migrate to urban areas in search of work.

<http://www.crdev.org/>

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## Prasanta Tripathy

Prasanta, a trained medical doctor, realized that matters of life and death are often in the hands of the communities rather than healthcare professionals. Engaging communities in interactive storytelling and game sessions has led to a 45 percent reduction of infant mortality in three years. Working in the poorest areas that have almost no access to primary healthcare, he is increasing the ability of mothers and communities, as the first care providers, to identify health problems and respond to them effectively.

<https://www.ekjutindia.org/>

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## Sachin Kumar Jain

Recognising the untapped potential of the mainstream media in India, to shift the mindsets of key stakeholders like the government, judiciary and the reading public, Sachin Jain is creating a cadre of informed and empathetic changemaker journalists and re-purposing their role from being passive reporters to critical agents who can influence large-scale social change. His organization is trying to develop a culture of rights-based and evidence-based approaches among journalists and civil society organizations.

<http://vssmp.org/>

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## Sanjeev Kumar

Sanjeev Kumar is socially and economically empowering women from the poorest communities in the mountain and desert regions of India through the financially viable but often overlooked practice of small livestock husbandry. Sanjeev makes women the key drivers of the entire cycle of small livestock husbandry, from rearing to medical care, to sale at market, and is creating a cadre of skilled and economically independent women respected by their communities.

<http://www.thegoatrust.org/>

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## Sunanda Mane

Sunanda Mane is bridging the gap between education imparted in secondary schools and real-life skills required in rural India. By introducing trained local entrepreneurs into schools, Sunanda creates an environment where students are able to develop entrepreneurial skills. As a result of her work in over sixty government-aided schools in rural Maharashtra over the last four years, absenteeism and dropout rates have significantly decreased.

<https://www.lend-a-hand-india.org/>

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## Jessica Mayberry

English and Hindi dailies in India do not have the resources and mechanisms to be able to source stories from rural and marginalized areas. As a result, they devote only 2 percent of their total coverage to rural issues. By building a pan-India network of professionally trained citizen video-correspondents drawn from the poorest and marginalized communities, Jessica Mayberry is creating the architecture necessary to ensure that the voices of the poor are heard in mainstream media.

<https://www.videovolunteers.org/>