

Stirring Anna-lysis: One vocal, other silent

LUCKNOW-BORN technocrat's invention transforming lives in Maharashtra, just 160 km from Hazare's village

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LUCKNOW: Anna Hazare is a social activist and Lucknow-born Dr Anil K Rajvanshi, 61, a technocrat. But both have one thing in common — the yen for change.

While many know that Hazare has transformed his village Ralegan Siddhi into a model one in Maharashtra, not as many may be aware that Rajvanshi is busy bringing about a silent revolution in several villages in western Maharashtra through his unique invention — “the lanstove”.

It is a three-in-one device that helps cook meals, provide electricity and pure water in sever-

al of these villages.

Coincidentally, the Phaltan town in Satara district, where Rajvanshi began scripting his great story, is roughly 160 kilometres from Hazare's Ralegan Siddhi. What's more he knows the social activist since the 1980s. Though he doesn't comment much on Hazare's stir, he remembers how the “widely respected” Anna at times behaved like an autocrat, “flogging those who came drunk to his village”.

As for the fight against corruption, this mechanical engineer from IIT-Kanpur goes about his job quietly but effectively. He has been trying to raise awareness against corruption,

ADVOCATING A RURAL STINT FOR IIM, IIT GRADS



■ Anil Rajvanshi

- There are several achievements to his name, but Rajvanshi feels the bigger task is getting the IITs and IIMs to start thinking of the common man.
- “Possibly getting the IIT and IIM grads to opt for at least a year's internship in rural India could just be the way to get started,” he says.

by visiting schools, colleges and universities across the country and talking to the young about the need to be ethical as well as explaining the connect between spirituality and technology.

After giving a lecture in IIT-Kanpur, Rajvanshi arrived in

Lucknow on Tuesday to catch up with old friends. He told *HT* he left the US at the peak of his career in 1981 to join the Nimbkar Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), a non-government organisation (NGO), in Phaltan.

“Half of my friends own the Silicon Valley. I still cannot explain why I chose to come back and settle in rural India. My wife Nandini gave up her US citizenship and we even decided against having our children in the US. It was as if we were driven by an irresistible urge to head back to India. We decided to settle in Phaltan, as my wife hailed from there. Was it a fit of madness? Well, may be,” he recalled. He said, “When we first arrived in Phaltan, things were so bad that one had to take a four-hour bus ride to Pune just to make a phone call. The poor power situation made things worse.”

That's when he discovered a multi-fuel lantern that could run

on kerosene, diesel or low concentration ethanol by using sophisticated tools of heat and mass transfer, combustion mechanics and fluid dynamics.

“The lantern also doubles up as a cooking stove which people of Phaltan and nearby villages found very helpful,” he said. He slowly improved on his “lanstove” — a combination of lantern and stove, that apart from cooking a complete meal also provided power and clean drinking water too.

“This was probably the first such invention anywhere in the world. What's more it runs on a low grade ethanol, a locally available and environmentally sound fuel,” he said.

The villages of Vadzal, Nimbhori and Jintinaka, situated within five kilometers of NARI, benefited hugely as it made life for the rural poor much easier. For his innovation, Rajvanshi was also given the Globe Forum Award in Sweden.

His invention has attracted global attention for the use of ethanol both for cooking and lighting in rural areas. He and his team are also credited with developing ELECSHA, an electric rickshaw that runs at 30 kilometres an hour and can travel 60 kilometres in one battery charge. ELECSHA led to the development of motor-assisted hand operated wheel chair for the physically handicapped.