

IPS Direct to Your Inbox!

your email

- [Global Affairs](#)
- [Africa](#)
- [Asia-Pacific](#)  
Afghanistan  
Iran
- [Caribbean](#)  
Haiti
- [Europe](#)  
Union in Diversity
- [Latin America](#)
- [Mideast & Mediterranean](#)  
Iraq  
Israel/Palestine
- [North America](#)  
Obama: A New Era?  
Neo-Cons  
Bush's Legacy

**Subscribe**

- [Development](#)  
MDGs  
City Voices  
Corruption
- [Civil Society](#)
- [Globalisation](#)
- [Environment](#)  
Energy Crunch  
Climate Change  
Tierramérica
- [Human Rights](#)
- [Health](#)  
HIV/AIDS
- [Indigenous Peoples](#)
- [Economy & Trade](#)
- [Labour](#)
- [Population](#)  
Reproductive Rights  
Migration&Refugees
- [Arts & Entertainment](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Express Freedom](#)
- [Women in the News](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Slideshows](#)
- [In Focus](#)
- [Readers' Opinions](#)
- [Email News](#)

INDIA

## Some Brain Drains Back

By Keya Acharya



**BANGALORE, Apr 15, 2011 (IPS) - They were the face of India's "brain drain" - the best and the brightest government-educated scholars who eventually left for foreign shores. Now, they have opted to give back as a gesture of thanks for the top-notch education they received.**

They are alumni of the Indian Institutes of Technology, the country's premier academic institute which the Times Higher Education Supplement has ranked the world's third best technology institution, after the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of California at Berkeley.

Set up by the government for post-war and post-independence industrial development, IIT started in Kharagpur in West Bengal in 1950. It now has 15 campuses all over India, its graduates considered among the country's academic and professional elite, many of them successful industrialists, entrepreneurs, businessmen and achievers.

Their education was heavily subsidised by the government, and they were at one point criticised for taking taxpayers' money only to leave the country, mainly for the United States.

"An awareness has now started that you must give back to society," said Collur Dhananjay, an electronics alumnus of the IIT in Kharagpur and secretary of the Bangalore chapter of the IIT Alumni Association of Kharagpur.

"This present generation of 'IIT-ians' are now seeing real wealth and want to do more," Dhananjay added.

Dhananjay is the point man collecting alumni funds for a project called "Light for Education" that aims to provide solar lamps to tribal children in rural villages.

Dhananjay said he was motivated by another IIT graduate, Harish Hande, who spoke at a forum of IIT alumni.

"I told the alumni that we have had an education subsidised by the people, including the poor. It is high time we played a role that was required of us after graduating," said Hande, whose work in spreading rural electrification has won him and his company, Selco-India, several distinguished awards, including the Ashden, popularly known as the 'Green Oscar'.

"It is not only of giving back to society," Hande told his alumni audience, "but about being part of it and contributing as a partner, not just a giver."

Dhananjay took Hande's idea on rural education through electrification to another senior IIT alumnus, Arjun Menda, whose corporate real estate firm, RMZ, funds education through the Menda Foundation.

### RELATED TOPICS

- ▶ [Asia-Pacific](#)
- ▶ [Development](#)
- ▶ [Education: The Key to Development](#)
- ▶ [Civil Society: the New Superpower](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

 [What is RSS?](#)

**LANGUAGES**

- [ENGLISH](#)
- [ESPAÑOL](#)
- [FRANÇAIS](#)
- [ARABIC](#)
- [ČESKY](#)
- [DEUTSCH](#)
- [ITALIANO](#)
- [JAPANESE](#)
- [MAGYAR](#)
- [NEDERLANDS](#)
- [POLSKI](#)
- [PORTUGUÊS](#)
- [SUOMI](#)
- [SVENSKA](#)
- [SWAHILI](#)
- [TÜRKÇE](#)



"The Foundation will match all grants that the Alumni Association garners for the 'Light for Education' programme," Menda said.

ADVERTISEMENT

The project began with the distribution of solar lamps for studying to impoverished tribal children in the high school level in rural villages in Karnataka.

Tribal communities in India remain among the poorest and most backward of Indian society. Despite several initiatives by the government, a World Bank 2010 report found that 56 percent of rural households still do not have access to electricity.

Under the "Light for Education" programme, each student is given a LED lamp powered by a pocket-sized battery that could be charged every school day at a centralised solar panel erected in the school.

The charged battery provides three hours of light for studying at home and saves the student at least 100 rupees (approximately 2.25 dollars) every month in kerosene cost for lamps, an expense that the poorest families find hard to meet.

Elsewhere in India, IIT alumni are doing their bit. In Bombay, Kharagpur-alumnus Puneet Kumar now co-ordinates a 'pan-IIT' company called Ekalavya Creations. The company was set up by well-known alumni from IIT Kharagpur, among them B.K. Syngal who is known as the 'father' of the Internet in India, and Arjun Malhotra, the co-founder of HCL, India's leading technology company.

Ekalavya has begun by travelling around the country, looking at IIT graduates working for development in the social sector. The group now plans to take these case studies to the next pan-IIT meet to motivate alumni.

But despite these efforts, the general consensus from alumni themselves is that IIT-ians are doing too little to help solve country's vast poverty and rural backwardness.

"In all my years in the IAS (Indian Administrative Service), I have not had any IIT alumni coming to me for help in collaborating on any work in the public sector," said Bangalore-based IAS officer Rajeev Chawla, an alumnus from IIT-Kanpur.

Chawla is recognised as the civil servant who successfully designed and implemented the e-governance project 'Bhoomi' that computerised land records in Karnataka over 2002 and 2003.

His work has served as a development model for other Indian states and international agencies.

ADVERTISEMENT

"Even those in the public sector are not achieving as per the capabilities and training they have had in their alma maters," Chawla said.

IIT Kharagpur Associate Professor Joy Sen said the bureaucracy within the governance system, rather than the IIT alumni, is more at fault, but agrees that mindsets in the faculty need to change to incorporate relevance to the environment and development.

Chawla blames Indian society, rather than the inadequacies of IIT faculty. "The rush for power, prestige and money is a social malaise that has included IIT graduates," he said.

The younger generation of alumni, however, are circumspect about criticism.

"We are technical guys, so this 'social front' has come late to us," said Bombay-based Kharagpur alumnus Kumar of the IIT Class of 2002.

"This is a start," said Dhananjay, speaking of the "Light for Education" programme. Ravi Chopra, a 'senior' from the Class of 1965 of IIT-Bombay working in watershed development in rural areas exhorted the alumni to "take a leap". (END)

[Send your comments to the editor](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

-  News Feeds RSS/XML
-  Make IPS News your homepage!
-  Free Email Newsletters
-  IPS Mobile
-  Text Only

[grab this widget](#) | [start a petition](#) | by [Care2](#)



IPS Pictures in [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)



**MOST POPULAR**

- ▶ [BAHRAIN: U.S. Keeps Quiet over Repression](#)
- ▶ [China's Green Blueprint Raises Stakes at U.N. Climate Talks](#)
- ▶ [ENVIRONMENT: Military Debris Threaten Oceans](#)
- ▶ [Haitian Trafficking Victims Discovered in Ecuador](#)
- ▶ [SENEGAL: Dispute Over Fishing Permits for Foreign Fleets Hots Up](#)
- ▶ [PERU: Endangered Monkey Survives in Tiny Private Paradise](#)
- ▶ [Emerging Powers Harnessing Neighbours' Hydroelectricity](#)
- ▶ [Kenyan Women Pulling Together Against Poverty](#)
- ▶ [Stress and Anger over BP Oil Disaster Could Linger for Decades](#)

[grab this widget](#) | [start a petition](#) | by [Care2](#)

[▶ U.N. Decries Stagnant Funding For Population Goals](#)

[READ IN IPSNEWS.NET >>](#)

**ECONOMY, TRADE & FINANCE**



▶ **A Fair Wind for Clean Energy in Central America**  
[More >>](#)

**REALITY CHECK - Missing the Millennium Development Goals?**



▶ **Colonial-Style Land Grabbing Back on the Table**  
[More >>](#)

**ENVIRONMENT**



▶ **Uncertain Flows the Mekong**  
[More >>](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Subscription](#) | [News in RSS](#) | [Email News](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Text Only](#)  
Copyright © 2011 IPS-Inter Press Service. All rights reserved.