



# The Power of **ONE**

---

BY VICKI GILHULA

NARASIM KATARY IS RECRUITING SUPPORT IN SUDBURY AND IN INDIA FOR PROJECTS THAT HELP PEOPLE LIVING IN HIS FATHER'S HOMETOWN. (ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT) HUNDREDS OF MEN AND WOMEN BENEFITTED FROM FREE EYE CLINICS HELD LAST FALL IN KANDAVARA.

---



**C**an one person make a difference in this crazy, confusing, complicated world? We all would like to think so. But the expression has become a cliché, an advertising slogan used to sell recycling, green products, a political candidate or to raise cash for a good cause.

People like Narasim Katary give us hope.

The city's former long-range planner is trying to make a difference in the lives of thousands of people in Kandavara, an impoverished community in the southern Indian city of Chik Ballapur.

"Canada was good to me, and good for me," Katary says. "I have never forgotten how lucky I was."

Now he is lucky for the people of Kandavara.

On this particular morning, while he drinks Indian coffee and talks about Project Kandwar, Katary is watching his computer screen for e-mail responses from doctors thousands of miles away in India.

Kandavara has a hospital but no doctor. No sanitary sewer system. No solid waste disposal system. Many homes do not have piped water supply. There is no end to the work that needs to be done.

Last year and the year before, Katary spent three months in India, and plans to return there this November for another three months. Thanks to the internet, he can do much of his work for Project Kandwar from his home office in Sudbury.

Katary has solicited the help of many of his friends and associates in Canada. In India, he has forged an association with a group of professionals headed by Mr. Srikanth, an MBA with the multinational Oracle, called The XVIII Horse Foundation. This is a non-profit organization committed to community development by promoting self-reliant business enterprises.

At the local level he has formed an alliance with the elders and the youth of Kandavara who are determined to lead the developmental effort.

Katary has appealed for assistance from politicians and bureaucrats, and convinced business people to invest in helping their country's most downtrodden citizens, the poorest of the poor.

"I've perfected begging," Katary says. He jokes he has spent so much time begging in the last five years, his knees are made of stainless steel.

But he becomes emotional when he speaks about Project Kandwar, and why he has dedicated his "golden years" to improve the lives of the people of Kandavara.

"My father went to the primary school in Kandavara. He did not have three meals a day until he got a scholarship to go to the university in Bangalore when he was 15."

His father, an outstanding student, graduated with a bachelor of science degree at 19 and went to work in the civil service. He had a successful career and eventually became a state cabinet secretary.

"It is a real Abe Lincoln rags-to-riches story," says Katary, who enjoyed a privileged life growing up in India in the 1940s and 1950s.

He studied civil engineering at the University of Mysore/Bangalore. Later he studied city and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania, and regional economics and economic geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Katary's name was often in the news in Sudbury in the 1980s when he worked for the city in long-range planning. He had his work cut out for him. Sudbury had been a one-industry town for 100 years. The city

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



“YOU CAN’T SAY NO TO STARVING PEOPLE,” SAYS SHANNON, DAUGHTER OF NARASIM KATARY (RIGHT PHOTO). SHE HELPS HIM WITH SOME OF THE COMMUNICATIONS FOR PROJECT KANDWAR. KATARY WAS ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO STARTED SUDBURY 2001 WHICH HELPED TO STIMULATE AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CLIMATE IN A ONE-INDUSTRY TOWN.

needed a Plan B in a hurry when the mines put thousands of families out of work.

Much like he does now for Kandavara, Katary had a vision for the future, but he had to sell it to the people with influence who could make it possible.

He conceived the first sustainable development plan for a North American city. The plan emphasized the need for creating an entrepreneurial climate in Sudbury. It sounds so simple now, but it was a hard sell 30 years ago.

Katary was the co-founder, with newspaper publisher Michael Atkins, of Sudbury 2001, the group of community leaders who were determined to keep the lights on in the city.

And then, he sort of disappeared. He was appointed to the Ontario Municipal Board in 1989, and for the next 17 years, he travelled around the province to attend OMB hearings during the week, returning home to his wife, Sally, and daughter, Shannon, in Sudbury on weekends.

By the time he retired in 2006, he had been laying the ground work for Project Kandwar for several years.

Impoverished Kandavara is located 55 kilometres north of Bangalore, the “silicon valley” of India.

“It is a plateau not a valley,” says Katary, who explains that life has improved for many Indians thanks to the information technology, but not for the majority.

“There are 1.1 billion people in India, 80 percent earn less

than \$2 per day.”

Approximately 50 percent of India’s population is under the age of 25.

The population of Kandavara is about 4,100, about half are dalits or ex-untouchables.

Things are bad in Kandavara, but there are worse settlements. “It is not a slum by Indian standards,” says Katary.

It took a while for the local citizens and authorities to trust him and not see him as a “jerk” from a foreign country.

“You can’t go into a village as an outsider,” he says. So he sought the advice of the elders as well as recruited young people, because he did not want to be seen as a threat to the power structure. It also helps that he speaks the local language.

One of the first projects was to rehabilitate a school in the community—the school his father had attended as a child. The school was built in 1845, and was so dilapidated that classes could no longer be held there.

One of India’s preeminent citizens, Mr. Vishweshwaraiah, went to the primary school, and Katary was able to convince the managing trustee of a foundation in India, Anita Reddy, to sponsor the renovations. The school has become a community centre and has given the residents a sense of pride.

Last fall two eye examination camps were held and attended by more than a thousand needy people. Both camps were undertaken free of charge by the staff from the well-known eye

hospital in Bangalore, Narayana Netralaya. Eye glasses were donated by the Lions Club of Sudbury.

“One of the eye camps was fully sponsored by Ramesh Balasar, a successful businessman in Chikballapur. He spent a good deal of money to make the camp such a major event,” says Katary.

Gisele Chrétien, chair of the hospital board in Sudbury, arranged for the donation of medical supplies from the Sudbury Regional Hospital as well as laptop computers from Collège Boréal. Air Canada Jazz and Lufthansa agreed to transport them to India. The City of Greater Sudbury has made available a storage facility to store donations prior to shipment.

For another project volunteers cleaned up the open gutters in the village. The next challenge is to build a vocational training centre near Kandavara.

Women and young people cannot afford to leave their low skill jobs to take free upgrading in the city for even two weeks, so the plan is to build the centre closer to them, says Katary.

He is lobbying Indian officials to donate some land for the centre. He is patient, sometimes waiting for hours for a five-minute meeting with people who might be able to assist him.

There are also plans for upgrading homes, improving the sewer system, bringing piped water to all households, building a playground, an orphanage, a retirement home, to upgrade the hospital, and to hire a doctor to work there.

“This is community work, not personal charity,” Katary says.

It is hard not to want to give money to some of the people he meets.

“The demand for cash would be so great...I look for projects that help everyone,” he says.

While Katary was waiting for responses from doctors in southern India, he got some good news. A Sudbury chartered accountant, Brad Lecour, has agreed to provide volunteer services for Project Kandwar and to help set up a registered charity in Canada.

Carmen Simmons, the executive director of the Sudbury Community Foundation, was happy to be asked to be one of the founding board members.

“Narasim is a dear friend. It is amazing what he has been able to do, and how he has pulled people together here and in India to get things done.”

“We examined if a foundation would work and found a registered charity would work better...And I was pleased to have my name associated with it.”

Other Sudbury residents who are currently contributing their skills and time to Project Kandwar include board member Deb McIntosh, and Matt Livingstone who designed and manages the website.

Katary’s daughter, Shannon, is also one of the people inspired by her father’s mission. The political science graduate helps him on things such as power point presentations and other communications.

“You can’t say no to starving people,” she says. [SL](#)



**CANADA BROKERLINK  
INSURANCE. IN PERSON™**  
[WWW.BROKERLINK.CA](http://WWW.BROKERLINK.CA)  
93 CEDAR STREET  
675-1307

Enjoy a **1** year  
subscription  
(4 issues) for only ~~\$16.59~~  
**\$8.30** Save  
**50%** off  
newsstand prices!

**sudbury  
Living**

Available on select  
newsstands around  
Sudbury!

To subscribe, log onto:  
[sudburylivingmagazine.ca](http://sudburylivingmagazine.ca)

**ANNE'S**  
SEWING & DESIGN  
227 REGENT ST. NORTH 669-4371

Custom Window Treatments  
Sunshades & Blinds  
Bedding & Accessories  
Drapery Repair & Installation

**DISTINCT DESIGNS**



Sudbury  Living  
**Mauro Zuliani, B.E.S.**  
Broker

**Putting your  
real estate  
needs first.**

[www.sudburyliving.com](http://www.sudburyliving.com)  
**RE/MAX** Sudbury Inc., Brokerage  
293 Larch Street, Sudbury ON  
705.671.2222