



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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WOLDEMARIAM: This is an interview with Mr. Ravichandar who is a former member of the BATF (Bangalore Agenda Task Force) among other things. We'll get a little bit of his life history in a moment. Actually why don't we start with your life history. Why don't you tell me a little bit about where you come from, your background, education?

RAVICHANDAR: *I did my mechanical engineering from BITS (Birla Institute of Technology and Science), Pilani. It is in Rajasthan, up north. I did my MBA from IIM (Indian Institute of Management) Ahmedabad. I initially worked with a subsidiary of Bosch. For the last 25 years I have been running my own research and consulting business.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Feedback, right?

RAVICHANDAR: *Feedback Consulting that focuses on assessing business opportunities in India, typically for Indian companies as well as overseas companies. So my day job really is I'm the chairman and managing director of Feedback Consulting. We have over 140 people on the rolls across four cities. Work that we have done has resulted in over 6 billion dollars worth of investment in India. So that's one part of my life.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Are you originally from Bangalore?

RAVICHANDAR: *Not really. I've lived the bulk of my life in Bangalore but I'm actually from Tamil Nadu, so I'm a Tamilian. The reason that I'm really speaking to you is more about my interest in urban issues. My interest in urban issues actually started in the year 2000, end of '99, 2000, when S.M. (Somanahalli Mallaiah) Krishna, the then Chief Minister (CM) became the Chief Minister of Karnataka in that election.*

So one of the things that he set up was the Bangalore Agenda Task Force and we'll talk in greater detail. I'm just trying to give you a quick snapshot of where I'm going to this urban reform issue.

WOLDEMARIAM: Sure.

RAVICHANDAR: *So at that time Nandan Nilekani who was then the MD (Managing Director) of Infosys and currently the UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India) chairman was made the chairman of the task force. We went back a long way. So he asked me whether I would like to get associated with it. At that point of time I had no understanding of urban issues, had never interacted with a bureaucrat in my life or a politician.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So you had a long relationship with Nandan prior to that?

RAVICHANDAR: *Yes, prior to that. Of course when he asked me I said, "Look, I don't know what it entails but I'm willing to give it a shot." So from 2000 to 2004 I was a very active member of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force. We'll come to some of the specific initiatives; I'll give you a sense of the whole story. But during 2000 to 2004 I spent close to two years of my life, professional time, working on city initiatives. So for two years my company really didn't have my services—.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So this was, I'm sorry, just a question, for members of BATF was this pro bono work?

RAVICHANDAR: *It was all pro bono. We had an opportunity to work with the system and we came up with a pretty innovative model, which I'll talk about. So the thing really is, from 2000 to 2004 one worked very closely with the system during those four years. I was involved in a whole lot of initiatives related to self-assessment scheme, BDA (Bangalore Development Authority) infrastructure projects, traffic and a whole lot of stuff. That really gave me a bird's eye view of how the system of government, government-citizen interface, all that works, because I've actually spent loads and loads of my time in the corporation, in the BDA, in the police departments, spending whole days with them. So one had a really close look at how this place works. So that was phase one of my involvement.*

In 2004, S.M. Krishna (SMK) basically lost power and the new dispensation that came in was very clear that it wouldn't want to continue with the BATF experiment because it was too aligned, associated with SMK, so it obviously died a natural death. But some of us became urban junkies because those four years and looking at it closely gave us a sense as to what are the challenges that need to be addressed. We felt that we knew what could be done. So then four of us, three of us were BATF members, and a fourth was at the eGov Foundation, which was basically Nandan, Ramesh Ramanathan of Janaagraha, Srikanth Nadhamuni of eGov Foundation, and me. The four of us started doing a series of meetings post the closure of BATF, sometime around August of 2004, where we said, "Look, we have a body of learning, why don't we try and do something with it. Wherever someone is willing to take the ideas and run with it."

Nandan had a whole lot of contacts at the central government level. So he said, "Let's go and peddle our wares in terms of what we know. If we have a receptive audience for what we have to say about urban reform at a national level, let's go and make the case and see where it leads us." So between October of 2004 and January 31st of 2005, during that period of four months, we made about eight to ten visits to Delhi, met with a range of people from politicians to bureaucrats, from opposition leaders to Controller of Auditor General, a whole host of people to, what I would call, is really, create a coalition of the willing. To get them to see that the time to do something for urban India has come.

The JNNURM (Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission) resulted from that initiative. So actually the core kernel of the JNNURM came as a result of that series of meetings. It has taken shape along the way; it has many other people's inputs as it went along. But the core kernel of the 12 billion dollar JNNURM came from a bunch of four guys who just said "Let's go and start talking about it, let's try to reach out to people and try and build a coalition for this idea." So that was really JNNURM.

WOLDEMARIAM: Is this actually created by a government act?

RAVICHANDAR: *It is not an act. It is a government program called the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. It is the fourth largest program of the government of India. It basically sets aside 12 billion dollars for 63 cities across the country as central grant funding for projects. I'll talk briefly about what the JNNURM is. All this came from what we learned during our BATF days. So essentially what we went with, the core kernel ideas*

came from our experience of the last four years. There was traction for the idea because people felt that the time for urban India had come and the government put this on their program. It's running and we'll discuss that. So that's really another thing that one was associated with.

Then post that, once the scheme really got announced, one had no role in JNNURM, so I moved on to a third part of my life in this urban space because by this time I mean I was as urban a junkie as you could imagine.

WOLDEMARIAM: Sure.

RAVICHANDAR: *So the third one, while version one and two had a fair amount of interface with government directly and government as a willing partner, the third one is more about trying to help cities reform themselves through external assistance. So one floated an idea called City Connect because the other thing I learned during the last 5 years, the 2000 to 2005 period, was that the one major player in the city that did not understand urban governance was corporate India and industry members of society.*

There were NGOs (nongovernment organizations), there was civil society, there were others, but the industry people didn't get it: that if a city did not work, their business suffered. So I articulated a proposition saying that we need to create a platform called City Connect, which was inclusive. I'll talk about that later. For the last five years, one has been plugging away on the idea of City Connect. We now have a City Connect in Bangalore, in Chennai (formerly Madras). We are in the process of — Kochi (formerly Cochin) also has a quasi City Connect, and we are in the process of setting up City Connects in Pune, Vadodara, and Ahmedabad—

WOLDEMARIAM: So these are essentially a form of public-private partnership (PPP) right?

RAVICHANDAR: *But it's not really PPP, I would really call it more PPI (Public Private Initiatives) in a sense. See typically in the PPP format let's say Vivendi gets a solid waste management contract. The private sector gets paid for its services and therefore they can do a better job of garbage management than the corporation and they get paid for it. So typically PPP, in the World Bank definition context, is a private sector works along with the public sector and the private sector gets monetary return in the sense for its services rendered.*

In what we are trying to do, the involvement of City Connect with the government comes free of charge. We bring expertise and we bring volunteer energy to city projects, both from conceiving it, helping agencies conceive it, helping agencies implement. The serious spending is done by government through their tender process. We are playing a facilitator role in this expertise. Therefore I don't want to get it bracketed under PPP because in this case the return for the people who are involved in it is a better city, not any monetary kind of interest that we can do this better. They're spending money, time, effort, and volunteer energy to make this happen. It is a work in progress. I see this as a fifteen, twenty-year journey before it takes roots. But it has the seeds of an idea we believe in based on what we have seen over the last four-five years. It takes time for industry to get the idea. It takes more time for

government to buy into the idea and then this relationship to start working between the City Connect platform and government.

So essentially, briefly, I mean to again just recap, things started with the BATF. I was partly involved in helping catalyze the JNNURM and I am now currently evangelizing the City Connect platform and I continue to do that while I write in various magazines and push the idea forward. So this is really where I'm coming from to this whole area.

WOLDEMARIAM: Excellent.

RAVICHANDAR: Now we can start with the BATF.

WOLDEMARIAM: Sure, sure. Let me ask you a little bit, before we get to the BATF. I mean this is part of the BATF, but a lot of people have spoken about the 1990s as sort of this moment of, this moment where this demand for reform or change in public service delivery sort of came to the fore. I'm wondering what was it about the 1990s? Why did this demand crystallize in the 1990s? I mean presumably these problems had existed for a long time, right?

RAVICHANDAR: *I think the milestone point there is the liberalization of '91, '92. See, in pre-liberalization we had the "license raj" and its attendant controls on society, broadcasting, television, telephony penetration and all that stuff. Post liberalization you had a whole lot of revolution taking place on multiple fronts. Income levels started rising at one level. Foreign travel started going up. You started having a plethora of channels where people were exposed to stimulus from the external world in more ways. But still, in the context of the kind of exposure people had, more people got to see what the larger world was like. There was rising income and consequently rising aspirations.*

All this led, in our cities, to this middle class getting more into a demand-oriented, rights-oriented kind of framework saying, "Look, we deserve better, we need to know more. There needs to be more transparency," and stuff like that. It was also a time when, for example, they started having an electricity regulator, a telecom regulator, so it was a whole thing that there were citizens' interests to be protected and the like. So that was one kind of thing that started happening in the '90s.

Then among the NGOs in civil society, like you've mentioned about PAC etc., they started doing this poll saying, "What do people feel about civic services?" So you do a poll and you put it out there. Then that generates some debate in the media. Then people say "I agree" or "I disagree with it". Then a climate for change starts taking place. That's really what I think led to change. The other thing that happened is with rising income and rising aspirations. Some of us were fortunate to fall on the right side of what happened as a result of all this liberalization. Consequently with a generation of a certain amount of wealth for some individuals, some people felt that it was time to do some give back to society.

If you take for example Nandan, during our BATF experiment, he spent close to a million dollars of his personal money behind the idea of BATF having professionals, etc. People like me, we didn't have the monetary resources of that kind, but we were doing well enough to take time off from our business to provide more time and energy to causes like this.

WOLDEMARIAM: Sure.

RAVICHANDAR: *So you then started having a set of people who started, if I can say, winning out in what was happening in the post-liberalization phase and felt a need to engage and give back, in whichever ways that they felt comfortable with. So the system started developing... citizen aspirations, citizen demands, media, some civil society groups asking for certain things, a certain set of individuals who were willing to actually work with the system, not for personal gain but for a larger societal kind of gain. It is difficult for many people to understand. When we were working everybody said, "You had to have an agenda in this. Nobody gets involved without having a hidden agenda." Ten years on they're still trying to find out what the hidden agenda is. So people do crop up when the system gives them an opportunity.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So along these lines, talking about the demand for reform, a lot of people have said, and maybe this gets to the criticisms of the BATF or this reform period in general about the role of big technology firms, that kind of—

RAVICHANDAR: *Right.*

WOLDEMARIAM: I don't know, this kind of almost the sinister interest. I don't know if you can call them sinister interests of these big corporations. But some other people contend, no, I mean, it was just these individuals privately who committed themselves to these reform efforts.

RAVICHANDAR: *Right.*

WOLDEMARIAM: I guess I'm wondering what role big technology played in this process.

RAVICHANDAR: *I really think the criticism is unwarranted because the kind of criticism was along the lines that you mentioned: that big corporations and things are embedding themselves into the system through this route and they are effectively taking over the reins of what government policy should be. It basically assumes that the general public is a bunch of guys who don't understand what's happening and that it is possible in this day and age for somebody to do this kind of resource capture in the government and run with the policy. I think it is a bit too naïve. But the underlying thing there really was—and like you mentioned sinister, people felt that there has to be something hidden there, some gain. What really lies in the BATF is that when you get involved in working with government on public policy issues, this type of criticism comes with the territory. If you can't stand the heat in the kitchen then it is better not to go in. So you can go and say, "Look, my intentions are very good and you're misunderstanding me" and get into debates.*

*So we chose actually—I can talk personally for myself—I realized that these criticisms would be there. The important thing is to listen to what is being said and see if there is a grain or a kernel of truth in what is being said out there and therefore rectify anything that might be unilateral in what you do. So that comes with the territory. **But to answer specifically***

*To say that this resulted in **[Indecipherable 00:16:36]** influencing government is inherently wrong. Let me give you one or two data points.*

Nandan was the chairman and they said Infosys stood to gain. The reality, and you can check out the data on this, during the 2000 to 2004 period, which was the BATF period when Nandan was the chairman of BATF and the head of Infosys, Infosys had asked for land from Karnataka government for land in Bangalore to expand their thing. They did not get a blade of grass.

WOLDEMARIAM: What year was this?

RAVICHANDAR: *During that period. Because they were interested in expanding as their current campus was filling out. The point I'm just trying to say is, if you say that you stand to gain then you ought to go and visit the data. It was all over the papers that Infosys was interested in expanding its campus and was interested in expanding its footprints in Bangalore. It's no secret; they wanted, they officially asked for it. They wanted land to be allotted, etcetera. But the reality if you see, it is right now 2010 and as late as last year, Infosys still last year did not have a blade of grass in Bangalore.*

So if the hypothesis, that by embedding yourself in a project like BATF is true, you should think that some of these things will get done, but it didn't.

WOLDEMARIAM: Right.

RAVICHANDAR: *So the point I'm just trying to make is that from a conspiracy theory point of view, it's a nice conspiracy to run saying that the big corporation is going and doing it. But you have to visit each of the data points. Another one for example. BATF is very elitist in what it did. But if you look closely at the BATF program, whether it be the self-assessment scheme or the public toilets or some of the transport initiatives we did, the people who benefit are middle class and lower middle class. Public toilets are not used by the elite; it is used by people who are on the move and don't have a place to relieve themselves.*

Now if you enable and catalyze a hundred public toilets to come, to say that that is an elitist venture I think is missing the point. There is another criticism—since we are on the criticism we might as well deal with that whole listing—which was being said that we usurped elected representatives' authority because you worked with the system and the government and you were given to a taskforce and all that stuff. My response has always been "just wait a minute." Are you saying that the chief minister of the state who is also the minister for Bangalore city, who is the elected representative and the political elected representative of the place, cannot exercise his discretion as the elected representative to say, "I could do with some assistance and I am requesting a bunch of guys to help out"?

He says, "I could do with some assistance in the urban space and I'm appointing this task force." Which means you are fundamentally questioning the right of the chief minister and the minister of the state to appoint an advisory body or an assistance body, whatever you want to call it. If you say that that is not valid, then our status quo is invalid because we come through a government order of the current—signed by the chief minister with clear terms of reference in terms of what we are supposed to do.

WOLDEMARIAM: So am I correct in assuming that the criticism on this point was that the BATF was usurping the authority of elected officials? Was a lot of this coming from local councillors in the BBMP (or BMP; Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike – Greater Bangalore Municipal Body)?

RAVICHANDAR: *Not only the local councillors; local councillors are one level. It also came from a lot of NGO groups, particularly from left and extreme left kind of thing. It's a sad state of affairs but when you go down the dogma route and all you want to be is critical without getting into the data and the facts of the case, I'm all for debate if we are both willing to look at the facts. We can still differ in terms of views at least, if you go down that route. But if you come from a point saying that some of us are the devil incarnate, and I'm not going to change that position irrespective of what data points you throw at me, then we don't have the grounds to do a reasoned debate.*

So my point really here is, the unfortunate thing is you take a strong stance from which you say, "I'm not moving from here, irrespective of what you throw at me" and I'm basically coming saying, "I'm willing to stand corrected." But you don't have the grounds for a reasoned debate. So consequently whatever you do is bad, bad, bad. Therefore you then start fitting some bits of whatever you hear to your own thesis. That's really my complaint if I can call it against this line of thought.

WOLDEMARIAM: So give me, I mean you mentioned some of these extreme left NGOs but can you give me a better sense of what this opposition looked like to the reforms, to the BATF and the reforms of the Krishna period? I mean what quarters was it coming from and why? What were their interests?

RAVICHANDAR: *The interesting thing is, in years one to three actually when we were pretty effective and doing a lot of things, there was little resistance. It is when we started getting weaker in year four because politically the climate—that is when everybody came out of the window and started doing these period pieces on how we were bad, bad, bad. So the ironic thing is—because during the first three years, if you went and did a poll in Bangalore city, and actually there were polls that we got done by an independent agency, Mode, which is now part of the TNS group. So they had independent agencies polling a thousand, two thousand people, and I'm happy to share all those surveys. We used to do a survey every six months.*

WOLDEMARIAM: That would be excellent.

RAVICHANDAR: *All that I will share with you. So of course you could always say it was commissioned by the BATF and therefore it is flawed, but it was done by an independent agency that is the world's second or third largest agency. That repeatedly showed that people welcomed the kind of initiatives that were being taken, not by the BATF, but by the government on a platform that the BATF in some sense was enabling. Because it was finally about government, it was not about us. I need to explain to you how the BATF platform was crafted because many people still don't get it as to what our model was.*

So if you take for example the self-assessment scheme of which I'm particularly proud, you go and do a poll and say, "How does the property

tax in Bangalore work?" People will give you rave reviews. In fact, to give you a sense of how much it was liked on the ground, the self-assessment scheme, five to four years after we had introduced it through a legislation—they tried to change the way the scheme would operate because in the scheme that we had designed we had removed the middleman's influence. We had removed corruption and bribe. Conservatively to the extent of five to six million dollars a year corruption had been removed. I designed that scheme. We took into account how much of speed money was being given.

People realized that even though they had to pay more money, because, just to give you a sense of the self-assessment scheme—pre-self-assessment scheme the BATF and the BMP (Bangalore Mahanagra Palike) did in 2000, the income, the property tax income of this place was about 25 million dollars. In a decade's time it has gone up ten times; it is close to 250 million dollars today and citizens welcome it. You tell me a scheme where finally the city gets ten times more property tax revenue and you don't have a revolt on the streets.

WOLDEMARIAM: Right.

RAVICHANDAR: *But what did the system try to do? Actually they tried to—they have legislated a law that tries to do away with the scheme that we had put in place. The law is the law for the rest of Karnataka but the citizens of Bangalore did not allow the law to be implemented in Bangalore. So today Bangalore has an exception that we can continue with the old self-assessment scheme—.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So there is no self-assessment scheme in the rest of Karnataka?

RAVICHANDAR: *No. I mean they have a self-assessment scheme but it is by a capital value system, a different valuation system. But more importantly it runs on the laws where inspectors can wind up at your doorstep and do an inspection. They exercise their discretion on the tax that you pay. In the Bangalore system, the core of the system is that the citizen is trusted. We say, "Trust the citizen and the tax revenues will go up." The more you trust the citizen and you have a transparent scheme of disclosure of what is my area and what is the rate applicable to me, people fall in line. It is a question of "How is your system structured? Do you trust the inspector to do the job and get the revenue, or do you trust the citizen?"*

WOLDEMARIAM: So this, the Karnataka-wide law was fought within the BMP?

RAVICHANDAR: *No, no, by the state.*

WOLDEMARIAM: By the state?

RAVICHANDAR: *The state legislation. That applies for all urban areas. It also applies to Bangalore but they could not implement in Bangalore—.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Because of the BBMP?

RAVICHANDAR: *Not because of the BBMP, because of the citizens. They wanted to implement it because the BBMP would love it because they can again start making money to the inspectors and all that stuff, "Inspector raj". They could not implement because politically it became untenable in*

Bangalore because residents' associations told the political parties that if you remove this feature in the city, we will not vote for you.

WOLDEMARIAM: Oh, I see.

RAVICHANDAR: *So the point I'm just trying to make is—and a lot of the people who were critical of the system, they realized that there were elements of what was happening here which had public support in terms of things. So that is why they never—they came out of the woodwork at that time when they felt that we were vulnerable in the sense that the BATF tenure was coming to an end. That is when you choose to come out and say that this is bad.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So tell me a little bit, in terms of the property tax, I mean I have heard—.

RAVICHANDAR: *I'm just taking that as an example because I was intimately associated. Jairaj was the commissioner and obviously without Jairaj—and there is a guy called Vasanth Rao who basically in the corporation worked day and night, and Ashok Dalwai the joint commissioner, to make sure that this became a reality. We were more the idea creators, but finally it has to be run through the government system. Therefore the BBMP ran the entire system.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So give me a sense of how an idea like the self-assessment scheme actually emerged.

RAVICHANDAR: Yes—.

WOLDEMARIAM: Were you guys in a room talking about this and then you—?

RAVICHANDAR: *Therefore this is a logical point to really get into—also just link up the BATF model. We got formed some time in November 1999. When we got formed, the BATF had about fourteen, fifteen members. But active members, people who really were working full time, pro bono, literally, were five of us. There was Nandan, Kalpana Kar, Ramesh Ramanathan, Naresh Narasimhan and me. We were the ones who were really, all the time, we were literally meeting every day saying what do we do with this, that.*

So at one of our early meetings back in December of 1999, we said, "Look, it's fine to say that we have this taskforce and if you see the government order of the taskforce it says we will give a report in six months, like a typical taskforce." And Karnataka at that time had ten taskforces. There was no shortage. But fortunately because we were a bunch of guys who knew better, we said, "Look let's just do a typical managerial analysis." Okay, we have a government order for one taskforce to help Bangalore have better quality of life and all that stuff. The chief minister at that time said, "Bangalore like Singapore". Unfortunate phrase because everybody caught on to that saying "it is far from Singapore."

So we said, "Look, given that this is really the kind of mandate we have, let's look at ourselves and look at what we represent and what we know." When we looked in the mirror, we saw a bunch of guys who knew zippo about urban governance, city management or any of that stuff. We saw a bunch of guys who had zero credibility with the bureaucracy because we

didn't understand how the bureaucracy worked. We saw a bunch of guys who were politically very naïve. We had no idea.

So we said, "All we see are weaknesses. Just because we have a government order that says, 'Help me fix the city' or something, doesn't give us the credentials to go out and do anything." So we said that we lacked credibility and that's the start point. So we had to build credibility about what we could bring to the table. That's point number one. Our team basically decided as a guiding principle that we lacked credibility and we needed to build credibility. Second, there is no way that we could sit and dictate to the government agencies that this is what they ought to do because even though they may not say anything to our face, the ideas would be thrown out of the window because finally it is they who are in the firing line. If something goes wrong in the government agency, under the service rules, they're the ones who will come under the fire of the vigilant authorities and the others. But we were truly, in that sense, extra-constitutional because we were not the ones who were guided by the service rules, etcetera.

So we realized very clearly that if the initiative was to be successful, we needed to get government agencies on board. The government agencies had to be seen as the agencies doing and delivering and not just a bunch of guys from the BATF who are Johnny-come-latelies and outsiders enabled by one government order. We saw this very, very clearly.

As a result of that, we said that we would try and craft a platform which would become a platform where city agencies could come and participate on that platform which the BATF—it is a BATF platform and we'll get the CM in attendance. From here came the basic idea, "Let's do this." We would tell the government agencies the following: "We will take up a few projects which are BATF projects, but we will run it through the relevant agencies. It may succeed, it may fail, but failure is ours because we own it. But we will work through the government agencies. It doesn't run as a BATF program. There is nothing like a BATF program. But we own a certain set of projects. We are like an a la carte offering. Wherever you want assistance of any kind we are happy to help assist. But you must want our assistance, we are not imposing ourselves saying we will do something for you."

So this is what we created as the BATF platform. In its heart it ran as follows. We said once in six months we identified six government agencies: the City Corporation, the City Development Authority, Police, Transport, Power, Water Supply and Telecom.

WOLDEMARIAM: Which were seen as essential to public—.

RAVICHANDAR: *Because these are the public agencies that impact 90% of city life. So let's bring these agencies and the CEOs onto what we call the BATF platform. They became members of the BATF platform. Then we said on this platform, once every six months, starting on January 24, 2000, the city agencies will—the CEO will come and stand up in front of Bangalore city, citizens, media and about 800 people, with the CM (Chief Minister) in attendance, with the Corporators in attendance. And though the CM came from the Congress Party, from the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), the opposition, we had Ananth Kumar who also attended these sessions,*

because we were very keen on bipartisan at all times. Finally we were trying to build a consensus of what is possible.

We told the government agencies, "You come here and in your thirty minutes, you set out what Bangalore can expect from your agency in the next six months, visibly, set it out. Six months later you or your successor—because government transfers do happen—will come and say, on the BATF platform we made these promises and this is what we have been able to do, this we have not been able to do and consequently the next six months this is what you can expect from us." So that really became the BATF platform. So January summit, June summit, January summit, June summit—a transparency, accountability summit if you can call it. The promises were not made by BATF members; they were made by the government agencies. They came and reported on what they did or did not do in terms of this thing.

At the back end, between the summits, we used to have internal reviews along with the CM (Chief Minister) who was also the Minister for Bangalore where they used to take stock and say "Where is the bottleneck, what do we need to do and where do you need assistance?"

WOLDEMARIAM: The agencies would do this?

RAVICHANDAR: *The agencies, with the CM and with the BATF members. We used to say, "Look, we're hired for ten, twenty urban professionals which we are paying for. We're willing to bring them to projects that you have committed on and we're ready to help; it has no cost to you. But we're willing to help to make those projects happen, but you must want it." So we had situations for example during the entire four years, the Bangalore Water Supply Board said, "We don't need any assistance, we know what is to be done but we'll come on the platform and make our commitments and we will do that."*

Agencies like the BMP, the City Corporation, the BDA, police and the BMTC (Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation), they said, "Look, we'd like to use you here and there," and they started using us as our credibility grew. That is how the board worked. We said some projects we will do. So on January 24, 2000, under this overarching kind of umbrella, there were four projects that we said were ideas that we would like to bring to the table.

So I made the presentation on the self-assessment scheme. The genesis really was the then commissioner, Jairaj, met up with Nandan and said, "Look, without money it is going to be difficult to deliver the increased services that are required. So money lies at the heart of what we need to do. So find ways to make us more sustainable on a financial front." That time, that task was given to me within the BATF saying, "Come up with an idea of what needs to be done."

WOLDEMARIAM: Of resource mobilization?

RAVICHANDAR: *Of what needs to be, for resource mobilization. Then what I did is I said, "Being a researcher I'm doing nothing new." I said, "I want to just study everything that people have written about it in the past." I came across this fantastic report. There are 72 reports about what needs to be done in Bangalore city, 72. The challenge was to implement a paragraph of that*

report. One paragraph was a challenge. So when I stumbled upon this report, which was done by Dr. Ravindra, it was done at IM Bangalore by Dr. Ravindra, BK Chandrashekar and one other gentleman whose name I cannot recall. It has phenomenal ideas of what needs to be done. There it had the seeds of the self-assessment scheme. There was a reference—then I started doing more research and realized that there was a Supreme Court judgment, Patna, and all that stuff. So taking the basic idea from this urban report which Dr. Ravindra and B.K. Chandrashekar had put together, an earlier scheme that the BBMP had tried to do but could not implement, looking at why it failed, why it didn't succeed, what is the legal tenability of doing this.

WOLDEMARIAM: Of the self-assessment?

RAVICHANDAR: *Of the whole self-assessment and the evaluation game. I put together a hybrid proposition which had elements of what worked, tried to overcome the weaknesses of what did not work. The typical analysis—I come from a management consultant thing.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Right.

RAVICHANDAR: *That became my presentation on January 24th, that we can move to a scheme like this. And the heart of that particular idea really was "Trust the citizen". Like the IRS (Internal Revenue System), do a 5% random check that becomes the compliance kind of thing. Mistakes apparent on record are pointed out. Make a simple form that is clear-cut, that is equitable across the city and put it out there. Because the law of the land does not per se directly allow that as it stands, but the commissioner has the discretion to give alternatives, make it an optional scheme.*

We expected a legal challenge to what we were proposing—.

WOLDEMARIAM: Because it was basically an executive order.

RAVICHANDAR: *It was an executive order but this can be done through the BBMP. The challenge came and we anticipated it, saying there would be a legal challenge. The Court said that the current taxation scheme through the revenue inspector had not been withdrawn. So what citizens were being given as an option, you could choose to go down that route and do business through the revenue inspector route, which is the traditional law, or you could use this optional route. So since there is no compulsion that that has gone away and this is the route, we see no reason why it cannot be done.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So this is what made it legal. And this was in Karnataka high court?

RAVICHANDAR: *Yes the Karnataka high court ruled. In fact, people were watching. The Karnataka high court ruled this seven days before the scheme closure. The moment the high court blessed the fact that this was acceptable from about a hundred or five hundred paying, the next day we had some 30,000, to 40,000 people paying up because it became a court-sanctioned scheme.*

WOLDEMARIAM: At some point later didn't another judge put a stay on this judgment—.

RAVICHANDAR: *No he didn't—.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Sorry, another judge put a stay on the judgment and then you had to guess—BATF members had to tell the judge that this would lead to a reduction and some kind of—?

RAVICHANDAR: *No, this was in the same case itself. In fact, in the arguments that the BBMP—it was not BATF—it was BBMP that represented in the court. They had to make the case. So the BBMP owned up saying that this was a good scheme to do and we were not withdrawing the other scheme. It was then that the judge noted in the observation, “I’m allowing this as an optional scheme but I have a suggestion for the state. Please bring what is happening here as part of the Act in the legislature so that you sanctify it through the legislature.”*

So that is when the system, what I call is “The Empire Strikes Back”. Invisible people started drafting the new law which they say is a self-assessment law, and they try to get it passed as the self-assessment. So you have to understand, there is an evaluation basis that can be either Annual Ratable Value (ARV) or CVS (Capital Value System) and there is a modality that is self-assessment. But when you read the fine text of the rule, the Act that got passed, the power again shifted from the citizen back to the bureaucracy, to the officers.

WOLDEMARIAM: So officers were still able to go—.

RAVICHANDAR: *In the new law that they had passed, they had the right under that law to do 100% oversight and passing case-by-case. Just to briefly put the two points of view which is the essence of it. Under the self-assessment scheme of the 2000 variety, if I fill out a form and pay my taxes I am deemed to have complied with the law as it stood, which means I have paid up my tax, unless I got picked up for a random scrutiny or there was a mathematic computation mistake in my calculation. I have complied with the law.*

In the new act I pay the same check, I fill the same kind of form, but I am not deemed to have complied with payment of property tax for a period of one year because the system has one year to review my tax returns, make physical visits, ask for me to appear, and only till they gave me an order on a piece of paper saying “You have complied with the tax”, I am not deemed to have complied. It’s huge and there is a price to get that damn piece of paper.

WOLDEMARIAM: In many ways it flies in the face of the whole point of the original legislation. [Interruption]

So am I correct in assuming that it was Department of Revenue officials themselves that were in opposition to the scheme you were pushing?

RAVICHANDAR: *Yes, it was. But the amazing thing is in 2000, they were actually—had to shift to the system because there was a climate of change in the air. You know it was like the Obama-weekend kind of era. You had a new chief minister. In fact, on that BATF summit of the 24th of June, at the end of that summing up summit, the chief minister said on that platform, “I am directing the BBMP to implement the self-assessment scheme of property tax from April 1st of this year.” He gave that as an executive directive saying, “Find things to make this happen”. That is when Jairaj*

and Vasant Rao and everybody else jumped in and we all worked through the system. Everybody realized that this—there was a mandate for this change.

So even the revenue officers, though they had tried to bring some objections to why this wouldn't work, had to become willing players in making this change happen because they realized that this had the momentum to go through. And it is amazing. Subsequently you know we tried to do a simplified cut of the other aspects—I won't get into the details—and we had to defer that reform because we realized that if we tried to do too much of reform in one go we would upset the apple cart. As somebody in the officer cadre told me, he said, "Ravi, leave some food on the table. Don't try to take away all the food. You've done the self-assessment scheme which is enough for now."

WOLDEMARIAM: So there was an idea—I mean, the change had to be incremental, right?

RAVICHANDAR: *Incremental. Every time you had to assess—for example, I'll give you another example during the property tax. When we did simulation of the property tax with the new system we found that for really old properties which were fixed at abysmally low rates, property taxes were going up twenty times and fifty times. So one of the other decisions that we took is we capped—saying that if the property tax by the new system goes up more than 2.5 times the earlier rate, it is capped at 2.5 times. So if the theoretical calculation goes up fifty times, you still had to pay only 2.5 times. Because they said in stages we will correct—.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So am I correct in saying—this is what I've heard—I mean there was a cap placed but there was a measurable increase in the actual rate?

RAVICHANDAR: Yes.

WOLDEMARIAM: That's right.

RAVICHANDAR: *Yes, 2.5 times. So because of that 2.5 times, again, just like the court case, we said, there will be newspaper articles on how an elderly, 85 year-old gentleman has to pay thirty times more, or a war widow has to pay this. We know these things will happen and scuttle the larger story. So give the cap, it doesn't matter in the overall scheme of things.*

The way we fixed the rate and the amount that people had to pay was, basically we took into account the money that the inspectors were collecting in cash and the money the system was losing because the inspector was collecting in cash and we fixed that. So you see everybody's checks, the money they paid to the corporation was significantly higher than before; but citizens factored in the money that they were paying in cash to the inspector which was never accounted for and in their minds they actually saw it as a pari passu kind of thing. And the system actually got the revenue in their hands for them to work with it.

WOLDEMARIAM: So basically you guys were taking down a Mafia basically.

RAVICHANDAR: *Yes. But at one level—Mafia in the sense that it's not one person, it is this group and it is a system which has a vested interest.*

WOLDEMARIAM: It's a vested interest.

RAVICHANDAR: *But the interesting thing really is, when you see an opening where it is possible to do this, we co-opted the citizen on our side, not by saying that we're getting rid of the Inspector Raj, but just by getting them to taste the difference. Then they realized that this is hugely different. Then the old system finds it difficult to come back because once people have tasted that you can actually pay property tax on the net and you don't have to ever interact with the revenue officer in your life, they love it. In fact, there is a premium that they're willing to pay for this benefit.*

[Interruption]

WOLDEMARIAM: Give me a flavor of some of the other, I mean obviously there were many reforms, but some of the other reforms across these agencies. So, for example, I've spoken with some people from the BWSSB (Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board) and they've spoken about the GIS information system that was created—

RAVICHANDAR: Yes.

WOLDEMARIAM: I don't know, some of these, maybe at the Transport Corporation.

RAVICHANDAR: *Let me talk about two or three—let me just quickly finish the BATF forum that came up in 2000.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Sure.

RAVICHANDAR: *So one was the self-assessment scheme, which I owned. Then Kalpana Kar, another BATF member, she ran Swaccha-Bangalore which is the whole idea of solid waste management, segregation of waste at source, wet waste and dry waste and then composting of the wet waste and dry waste to land fills, etcetera. In a manner—I mean if you came pre-2000 this place was full of litterbins with litter around the bin. But that project which Kalpana drove has resulted in the system going into door-to-door segregation of waste and collection of waste and management, which is again done through the BBMP. But just like I worked on the details on the self-assessment scheme, Kalpana worked on all the detailing on how the solid waste management program needed to run and that became another program that we owned.*

Then Ramesh, we said, "Look it's fine to say we will collect more money for the corporation, but we need to bring financial discipline for the corporation." So he came up with a fund-based accounting system.

WOLDEMARIAM: Tell me about this, I've heard about this.

RAVICHANDAR: *It really is still the scheme—the system had basically a single-entry system, double-entry book—I mean single-entry in terms of revenue and expenditure. We said we need to bring the assets and the liabilities on the books and we need to get into a more transparent system. So Ramesh, since he came from a finance background, ex-Citi Bank and all that stuff, he understood this whole thing very well. So he put together the FBAS (Fund-Based Accounting System) accounting system. In fact, out of Nandan's one million dollars, half a million dollars was spent*

because we hired thirty people to help re-engineer the corporation to conform to the requirements of a fund-based accounting system.

We actually re-engineered each of the slips. I'll tell you how that worked. That's another very interesting experiment. Again that was in the BBMP. All the stuff that we did here: the BBMP and the taxation, all part of things that we carried as the larger idea when we went for the JNNURM thing subsequently. So those were things. And the fourth one was Naresh, he ran with GIS Ward 76 as a pilot ward on how to do GIS. So these were the projects that we chose.

WOLDEMARIAM: In doing this, in selecting these projects, was there—was the concern initially in putting Bangalore on a sound financial basis?

RAVICHANDAR: Yes.

WOLDEMARIAM: Because you recognized resource mobilization was—.

RAVICHANDAR: See—.

WOLDEMARIAM: One thing that was extraordinary to me, well not extraordinary, but one thing I noticed, is that reading some of the literature people have said, there was a huge increase in actual budgets of these public agencies in this period. So this was central.

RAVICHANDAR: *It was central. In fact I really—we were naïve also—I told you about the fact that we had zero credibility and we needed to build credibility. We couldn't lord it over anybody and all that stuff at one level. We realized that money was required and that the money needed to be spent wisely which is why the FBAS system came. At that time we knew very little about urban issues. We were also finding our feet in this whole space. If we knew what we know now about urban issues, we would have done a whole lot of things much faster in year one because the other thing about this whole reform space is when you have the political capital you've got to expend it in a rapid pace and get the right kind of things through the gate because political capital—as we're realizing with Obama and everybody else—is a declining capital. It is never an appreciating one. It is a declining capital; resistance starts building up. So when you see a window of opportunity you've got to go and do this whole stuff quickly.*

So to come back to the question that you asked in terms of the money. We actually felt—what should I say, our naïve idea of the city corporation, because we saw that the third tier of city government did not really exist in the way it should exist. We had rosy notions about Rudy Giuliani and a Ken Livingston and all that stuff, but we never had the architecture to make that happen because in our system the federal government system is in reasonably good shape. The tier two of state government is in good shape, but tier three of city government, particularly in our cities, is broken down. It is relatively better in our villages with our panchayati raj system (rule by a committee of elders). We don't have directly elected mayors, we have a multiplicity of agencies. Nobody is in charge; nobody is minding the shop which is why when you have crises in our cities, whether it be the Bombay floods or the Bangalore infrastructure problem. The chief minister of the state has to step in and start answering questions, which is ridiculous.

So our pipedream really was that we would have an empowered third tier of government where there would be increased powers in the third tier of government but they would have a system by which they would be answerable to citizens through citizen participation and they could decide where they would source their services from. It can be from the Bangalore Water Supply Board or it could be from somebody else. So we really saw the city corporation as somebody who would be accountable to the city for its services and answerable but how those services were delivered, they don't have to do it through the broken BBMP system and government systems. They could actually choose the best systems that could work for them. That's a choice that elected representatives would make.

Today we have a system where the third tier is not sufficiently empowered. They have become execution agencies of engineers etcetera, who don't have the qualifications to do storm water drains and roads and infrastructure. But they're the ones who are becoming executing authorities. So you have sub-optimal outcomes everywhere. Poor execution, poor planning, insufficient authority. So you have the worst of all.

So the idea really was that if you could get this kind of a third tier thing, they are empowered with money but their systems of control through the fund-based accounting system to make sure that—money may still be badly spent, but the fund-based accounting system ensured that we would know where it was spent. It was not necessarily that you would have the best spending. So that was really the overarching thing that we were trying to do in this particular initiative.

So you were asking about FBAS. FBAS was really re-engineering. The heart of the ideas is disaggregation and aggregation. If you disaggregated revenue items and expenditure items to the lowest cell at which you capture the record you can then aggregate and slice it any which way you want. So put it another way, if I was replacing a streetlight on Residency Road, and if the expenditure got caught at the level of bulb, light, Residency Road. If I capture the cost at that level and similarly revenue from Residency Road from property tax here or from any other advertising tax etcetera from that road, I can then aggregate to say on Residency Road what's my total income, what's my total expenditure. On lights across the city what's my expenditure, on garbage what's my expenditure. You can start slicing, dicing, to be able to do the right kind of MIS (Management Information Systems).

So we re-engineered it in a manner that we would be able to track—because we felt that the administrator and the mayor needed this MIS to know what the hell was happening. Just to give you an example. When we do the FBAS we ask the chief engineer, and Ramesh is more competent to talk about the details, but I'm aware because we're all fellow soldiers in this whole thing. Ask the chief engineer, you tell us how many engineering, ongoing jobs are there. He looked around and he said maybe about 2500 jobs. We did a detailed inventory because we were working on building the system. There were 8500 jobs in the system.

What the chief engineer of the system said, 2500. That was the extent of knowledge of what was happening. So we saw this as an aid for better decision-making, not by us, because these are going to be in the hands

and control of the mayor and the commissioner, but for them to run the system a lot more efficiently.

Now to implement this we have to again think through how to make sure we get this implemented. It's not a question of saying, "This needs to be done and we spend to get there." We need to make sure they shifted to the system. So we got an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) done between the state government and the BBMP. The MOU said—if you really look at the operation between the state and the city corporation, the city corporation needs two things from the state. The state in its budget says, "I will give so much grant to the city corporation." They have to make sure that that money comes as promised from the state.

The second thing is, if the city corporation is to collect a rupee of money from the citizens, they need an enabling law provision in the Municipality Act which the state has to pass. It is not in their hands. So if they are to collect a solid waste management fee of 20 rupees per month, there has to be an act that enables them to collect it. Then they can go ahead and collect it. So we passed an MOU which said the following: The state government said I will give you the money that I promise you and I will pass the enabling legislations that we mutually agree on that needs to be passed. In return, you will have financial discipline, you will have the property tax system, you will do the fund-based accounting system and you will give me quarterly and half-yearly returns of this thing. I want this compliance from you in return for this, that's the MOU.

So once the MOU was signed, we stopped the earlier system of cash vouchers, etcetera, and shifted to the fund-based accounting system. That's all the formula said. But the system again beat us, the empire struck back. The moment we were out of the system in a sense, until that time every kind of job—replacing a light—had a unique job code. Carrying solid waste garbage had a unique job code, all that stuff. So you could monitor what was happening. The way the system—the fund-based system is in place. The way they overcame this is to say, this business of keeping track of lights and garbage at that level is all rubbish, let's forget those job codes. We will create area just job codes. Say 0001 for Richmond Road, Residency Road. Said anything that happens, we will give a contract to somebody saying, "Whether it is a bulb to be replaced or some garbage to be done, it just gets done under that code." In one stroke the ability to capture the cost by each item had went for a six because they just said, "We will now give one area as a job code. Say this area is to be managed by somebody for so much money and he just maintains it."

Therefore again we go back to opacity of the earlier days. So that's the other learning in this reform space. To stay and stay with the reform you need eternal vigilance and you need to have the ability to have traction and to stay because people are trying to figure out how to undo what was done. They tried to do it in SAS also. But SAS, the citizens had tasted it sufficiently. In FBAS the citizens don't taste it. FBAS is more an administrative tool to manage the MIS.

WOLDEMARIAM:

I guess those who opposed FBAS were really those who sought autonomy over—I mean wanted this to be a black box, right?

RAVICHANDAR: *Not only that, but people don't like sunlight. Sunlight is a disinfectant for real world systems and government systems. One way they called it transparency and openness. They know that that is lethal if that is allowed. So you fight it. Over a period of time these things will change. That is what you see with Right To Information, which is happening and is now becoming a powerful tool. But in our NURM we have been saying that we need to go beyond Right to Information to a disclosure law where proactively the government of the day needs to disclose—you see, the law of the land here is that private sector companies every quarter have to set out quarterly audited results for their shareholders, even where there is no government money involved. When we take government as a whole, central, state and city, I pay 50% of my money as some form of tax or the other, between the income tax and the sales tax and the excise and a whole lot. They take 45 to 50% of my money.*

Then they say "I have a right to information; you have a duty to disclose what you did with my money." In fact, we had an institution that Ramesh came up through Janaagraha—because he had done FBAS and he saw how the pieces fit together—called PROOF, Public Record of Operations and Finance. It ran during that period where the city corporation once a quarter used to come before the public and say, "This is the money we received and this is where we spent it" as an accountability mechanism.

In fact, the kind of things that we did from 2000 to 2004 will be mainstream in India in another 20-25 years time. It takes time, but the seeds of what got done will find their way to the system and happen.

WOLDEMARIAM: So my last question about this particular set of reforms: what happened in the Transport Corporation? I don't have a good sense of what happened there.

RAVICHANDAR: *See, in the Transport Corporation we had many officers at that time. Obviously they had their own schemes. The unfortunate thing is the transport, for example, the CEO (Chief Executive Officer), he saw that he got his—what should I say, exhibit his muscles by saying, "I added a thousand more buses." It's the wrong metric. Ideally the metric should be that people moved from point A to point B saving 10% of their time. So the metric has to be more about mobility. But unfortunately the metric is about "I added so many more buses."*

We said fine, whatever you want. At least the city got more buses. So his emphasis was more on buses. They did some phenomenal things on their own. They put together a GPS system for their buses—they could monitor the bus traffic internally. There were lots of those kinds of projects. From the BATF perspective, as our input to them, we were very keen on a direction-oriented system, saying that if you do a direction-oriented system, people may need to take two buses to reach their destination but they will move faster through the system and the technology of smartcards, etcetera, allows you to board another bus and go for that same fare.

So we were actually keener on that idea of direction-oriented buses which has now come subsequently, Big Ten and others. But the then BMTc felt—and they said let's do our research to you and check it out if necessary. But we understand the consumer very well. People want to board a bus and in that bus it must go to their destination. So at that

point in time we had 1200 destination-to-destination buses because the system was convinced that if people took a bus, that bus must take them to wherever they wanted. So we had a very inefficient route guide if I can say so. We had used Operations Society of India. They had done traffic simulation and models to show that if you actually did direction-oriented buses on arterial roads, you'd actually need fewer buses and you can run them with greater frequency but people would have to get off at one point and board a bus in another direction. You know how the system works—the grid system.

But we were not able to convince the then transport, I'm now talking the 2000 to 2004 period. Today's Transport Authority believes in the direction-oriented system. So they actually introduced on ten arterial roads, a direction-oriented bus every five minutes and now they're in the process of introducing the radial one. So there has to be—therefore, to do some of these things, the CEO of that body has to buy into it as a matter of this thing. But they did some amazing things. I mean their GPS project was very good. BMTTC is one of the profitable bus companies in the country. Of course there is a reason for that, because they manage to get from the state government an indexation of bus fares indexed to petroleum prices, diesel prices.

WOLDEMARIAM: Ah.

RAVICHANDAR: *So if the diesel prices rose, they did not have to wait to get government permission to increase the fares. Nobody talks about that. It's a huge thing, because then they can quietly increase the fares, and be viable, while in Chennai, the fares that they are charging are fares which are twenty years old because as a populist measure, they didn't get permission to this.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Sure, sure.

RAVICHANDAR: *But of course, having said that, if you take the Volvo bus etcetera, BMTTC is clearly one of the better bus systems. Now of course Ahmedabad with its BRTS is playing catch-up.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Let me ask you another question. This is perhaps a more difficult question, but it seems like in this whole reform process there were sort of key nodes: there was a Chief Minister, there was the private sector through the BATF, there were the NGOs, there were civil servants, right?

RAVICHANDAR: Yes.

WOLDEMARIAM: The civil servants seem to be a very important actor.

RAVICHANDAR: *Very important.*

WOLDEMARIAM: In your experience, some took initiative on their own, some were very receptive towards your ideas, but there must have been some kind of observable differences in the responsiveness of civil servants to these reform efforts. I'm talking particularly about the people that sort of ran these agencies, that had the power.

RAVICHANDAR: *Right, right.*

- WOLDEMARIAM: What do you think accounts for some of these differences? I mean why were some civil servants or members of the IAS (Indian Administrative Service) willing to seize this initiative and say, "Let's do this", and others were kind of—?
- RAVICHANDAR: *You bring up a very, very interesting question. In fact, Jairaj, for instance, was the commissioner at the BMP. In fact, Jairaj was instrumental also in suggesting that we should have a BATF.*
- WOLDEMARIAM: Right.
- RAVICHANDAR: *So for example we had Jayakar Jerome who was BDA (Bangalore Development Authority), who was really unknown prior to the BATF experiment. He was initially quite wary about the BATF platform.*
- WOLDEMARIAM: Right.
- RAVICHANDAR: *But for instance when I talk about specifically Mr. Jerome's case, he made some commitments in the January 2000 summit and six months later when the first report card, if I can call it that, came where the CEOs had to come and present. It became quite clear that the BDA had performed the best in the first six months. Somewhere I think, though we have never overtly discussed it, Mr. Jerome realized that this was a forum where he got a high from the ability to say, "I will do these X things" and come back and say, "I did X in terms of things." Then he took on greater tasks for the next six months. But he was motivated, saying, "I'll go back and report that I did this."*
- So what happened was for example, an officer like Jerome saw the power of what this platform could be and it acted as a motivator or an incentive for him because he was also getting visibility for things because these became programs that he went public with and showed delivery. Now the BMP for instance, in contrast, had also been effective—they had the self-assessment scheme, but it took two years to realize that it was a great thing. The BDA had projects, which were roads, etcetera, which were more visible in the short run. BMP took the bus shelters, some of the toilets started coming. So BMP also had wins. But the BMP mandate is so huge that if they promise ten things, three things got done and seven were still difficult because the terrain is a lot more difficult and they have the corporators. So it is not a level playing field between the agencies.*
- So some agencies—the reason that happened is, for example, Jerome is an example of an officer who fully embraced the system. Jairaj was hugely cooperative, but he was there only for a year. In a year he moved away from the BMP to another department. The police commissioner also saw the value in this. The BWSSB (water supply board) didn't really see what the larger idea—so it varies. So the personality of the individual also plays a role on whether they see that this is something that they wish to embrace or not embrace or to be wary about and watchful and then decide.*
- So I think there is an issue of personalities that are involved out here. The other thing is—this is my personal experience—bureaucracy tends to be a little suspicious of people like the Johnny-come-lately guys who come in and parachute into the scene. I think it is like that, they think that*

way because at the end of the day they are in the line of fire 24/7 and they suddenly see one bunch of corporate types parachute in saying, "We know the answers." That is why we never took the view that we knew the answers.

But the BATF platform started getting visibility. So in the public eye people saw that the BATF was making a difference. The reality is it was the BDA, it was Jerome, it was Jairaj, it was Madiyal, the police commissioner then, so different people. I'll give you another example of another reform, a fantastic thing. I'm very happy, proud of that particular one. A bunch of—three citizens, I mean, you wouldn't even look at them if they walked on the road—they landed up at the city police commissioner's office and said, "We know the answer to Bangalore's traffic problems."

It turns out they studied fifty, sixty, traffic junctions, mapped the traffic and came up with an entire map which were a whole lot of one-ways across the city saying, "If you did the one-way like this, you could solve the problem with our existing assets." Three citizens, who spent six to eight months of their life doing this, they were passionate about fixing it. See the power of what is possible?

The BATF had already come into being. So the police involved us and said "Look, here's the plan, tell us what you think of it." We said, "Look, we don't know enough about this. But we will co-opt a paid expert." So we spent about ten, fifteen thousand dollars and got experts in traffic saying, "Here's the plan, here's some data about Bangalore traffic, tell us how good is this." So they ran some transit simulation and some other mumbo-jumbo stuff. Then they said 70% of this plan is pretty good, 30% needs to be tweaked for these reasons and this is our suggested modified program. That became the seeds of a central area traffic plan. That then started getting implemented in stages. The first thing that we implemented which still runs to this date is near the Kanteerava Stadium in the city center.

At that time the city corporation was pushing for a 25 million dollar elevated fly-over project in the city center as the answer to that place. Through making this thing one way and doing some traffic improvement in the other place, the 25 million dollar fly over project became redundant because you had a zero cost solution to fix that problem and you didn't need to spend 25 million dollars which would have ended up as a 40 million dollar project and been delayed, the way our civic projects go.

So three citizens coming up with a program with a bunch of professionals outsourced looking at it, by serendipity come up with a solution which saved the city 25 million dollars. I mean it would have been the moral equivalent of the Big Dig in Boston. That's the kind of unintended benefit. So what value do you put to things like this?

I always believe that the wisdom of the crowds is way, way over the wisdom of a few people sitting in some room saying, "I know what needs to be done." In this case it was three citizens, unsung fellows who came up with the idea that this is a good thing to do. They didn't come out saying this makes the project redundant; but the moment you did this, the other thing became unnecessary. So that's another reform that happened.

WOLDEMARIAM: Excellent. So let me ask you this question about the civil servants. Tell me if there is some truth to this hypothesis. The BATF in creating this system of accountability, right, in saying, "You, as a civil servant, you come here, you tell us what you're going to do; in six months tell us how well you've done it," it created an incentive to perform, but it also provided the civil servants with an ability to say, "Look at my record, look at what I've done." In some ways it was almost—did it propel the careers of many of these individuals by saying "Look you're going to have some attributability for this, you're going to be able to say you've done this"? In that way creating an incentive to build careers?

RAVICHANDAR: *The answer is yes. In fact, those that perform on this platform definitely got their careers improved because of the high visibility at one level and high visibility in front of their boss which is the chief minister. In fact, the thing that happened, while people initially were skeptical, after we did two or three summits, other government agencies approached us saying, "We want to become members of BATF, put us on this platform." They saw—just to give you a very, very anecdotal piece of data, the six government agencies' CEOs—of the six government agencies on the BATF—got roughly an equivalent of—the two summits were two full days, and if you take the intermediate, they got an equivalent of four days of the chief minister's time in a year.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Yes.

RAVICHANDAR: *CEOs of some of the other government agencies would be lucky if they met the CM for a twenty-minute session once in two years as a kind of visibility and get the attention and mind share.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Sure, sure.

RAVICHANDAR: *So the writing is on the wall. When you create a platform that the political leadership wants and is taking stock and intervening, and he knows who is delivering, who is not delivering, it also puts pressure on the officer because there is no place to hide in this thing.*

The other thing this kind of a platform does is what I call the idea of cooptation (cooperation while competing) among the civil service. If you want citizen benefits in a city, the biggest thing that you need is integrated services across silos of government. By and large these silos are designed to withstand a nuclear attack. But to actually get the outcome you want, you need to have that integration which is what BATF really tried to become, that integrator across the platform. Now, these people at one level are competitors, even though they're timed on promotion, they are competitors fighting for certain space and recognition within the cadre. But they need to cooperate. The BMP needs to cooperate with the traffic police, needs to cooperate with the BDA to get a citizen outcome happening.

The BATF platform actually is that cooptation platform: may the best win out. And it is a healthy way to say, "Look, at the end of the day—sorry guys, I mean you have power, the salary is not so great, but through mechanisms like this we can create a certain kind of recognition." And there is another interesting side effect that happens when you talk about the bureaucracy and it actually happened with us and I noticed it, which

is when you have a CEO change normally in the bureaucracy—and this happens in the private sector, it happens in the public sector—success for the incoming guy is often to kill the initiatives of the predecessor and come up with initiatives that are his initiatives during his reign. It happens all the time. That's how the system is designed.

The people who work in the system also get it because the boss through a wink-wink, nod-nod, the new boss indicates that it is open season on what the previous initiative was. The people also take their cues, criticize that and say, "Sir, this is what we need to be doing. This is how it works." But because they had the BATF platform as a continuous platform for a four-year period—for example, we had four BMP or five BMP commissioners, I forget the number. But commissioner number four had to answer on promises made by commissioner number one on the BATF platform because the platform promises were common. At the end of the day it was not individuals but the institutional memory that you couldn't forget.

Ironically, I'm not saying this actually happened, commissioner number four was not particularly a great friend of commissioner number one, but he had to stand up for a promise made and say, "We will do this in the next six months" or not do it or whatever. He couldn't walk away from the promise. In my mind, one of the biggest benefits of a platform like BATF is the institutional memory and the history. There is no getting away from that. I will send you all the promises made on the platform. Many of them have been forgotten since then because the platform has closed. But I will share with you what that did. The bureaucracy saw this.

At the end of the day BATF did not die because the political system did not want us. The bureaucracy realized the power of what this is and for them it was really a demonic kind of power. So they all know how to kill this kind of a project. See, we are apolitical, but the easiest way to get the political leader not to perpetuate this, I just need to go and tell the successor of S.M.K. (S.M. Krishna), "It is a good scheme, very good scheme but if you propagate the same scheme all the credit will go to S.M. Krishna." Game over from a political point of view. Why would anybody want to promote an entity that is so strongly identified with S.M.K that even if something happened in the year 2012 the success is attributed to his vision?

WOLDEMARIAM: It is a power—.

RAVICHANDAR: *To such an extent that when he went as a foreign minister, Obama told him, and it has been reported in the press, "You are the architect of Bangalore" and he is referring it in Buffalo; he is saying, "Buffalo to Bangalore." He meets S.M.K. and says he is the architect. So at the President of the US level, S.M. Krishna is getting credit for something where the final pieces are but it is a brand identity that is built. Can you imagine that if that animal were still around right now under a different regime and credit still goes there? It doesn't have legs. So if the bureaucracy does not want to perpetuate this thing all they have to tell the political system—in fact, my belief is that when politicians come up with new dispensation, they need to create the platform and the idea. They need not call it the Bangalore Agenda Task Force, but they need to get the core idea that they could do with some external assistance along these lines.*

Right now for example there is something called ABIDe (Agenda for Bengaluru Infrastructure and Develop Task Force) in Bangalore.

WOLDEMARIAM: Right.

RAVICHANDAR: *But ABIDe does not have the basic principles on which BATF ran. ABIDe is an extension of government and people who are in ABIDe are using that to do what they feel needs to be done. They are empowered by the government. But we—and I'll send you—every six months we used to do citizen polls. We used to give a copy of the poll saying what is it that citizens care about that they want fixed. We gave that to the government agencies saying you don't need to listen to it but this is vox populi. Just to give you an example, when we did the first poll the state of the roads was the biggest clip. They said too many potholes. When we did the poll in June, the BMP, Jairaj, had a pothole officer. He actually said they had counted 32,132 potholes or some such number like that. Everybody laughed. But he had somebody monitoring the potholes and filling them.*

When we did the poll in June among citizens, roads went out of the window. Mosquito menace and overflowing drains became the problem because we were in the monsoon season. So it is the power of vox populi. The thing can work in terms of this thing but you need incentives for people to do the work and get the things done.

WOLDEMARIAM: So let me ask you the question about the question of high politics because it seems—from many people I spoke with it seems as though S.M. Krishna was sort of a crucial player in this whole process in the creation of the BATF, in the support that he provided the civil servants. Because I heard, I've heard in times before, any potential reform in the civil service if you ruffle some feathers, the political forces would tell the chief minister and the chief minister would remove them, right?

RAVICHANDAR: Yes.

WOLDEMARIAM: This was a problem. So he created this sort of—a political impetus for a lot of this. I'm wondering why that was the case. I mean what was it about S.M. Krishna? What was it about the times? I mean why wasn't this done before?

RAVICHANDAR: *The thing is like this. Without S.M.K.'s political support and air cover and intervention, this would have gone nowhere. The bureaucracy tends to take its signals from the political leadership. If they know that the political leadership cares about this initiative, and they know how to figure that out because they'll try to put a counter proposal and they'll see which way the political leadership leans and therefore they know where he stands on this, etcetera. So it was very, very crucial. In fact, S.M.K., I think he got what this whole thing was about well after his term was over. In fact, I also had the chance to meet him subsequently in Bombay (Mumbai). Nandan and I were called to explain to the Maharashtra chief minister what the model was about and we articulated the model.*

Right now, you see, we are doing a mix of academic analysis, putting it within a framework after the event as well more in a consultant kind of way of looking at it. See, when you are on specific issues, you are dealing with specific issues and it was very tactical at that point of time. It

was much later that he also realized that—because it was rumored, there were seven other taskforces at that point in time and six taskforces gave some report and sank without a trace. We were the only taskforce that lasted for four years. The taskforce government order doesn't say four years; it says report in six months. But we stayed there for four years because the political system just wanted this experiment of joint working to continue.

So what it was really was to my mind, it required many moving parts. Clearly the biggest moving part was the support of the political system, one. Second, it needed the bureaucracy to play ball. The bureaucracy played ball not because it liked the idea but it saw that it had the political support from that particular thing and it made sense to go along with what was being crafted. That was really why it went along with it.

Third is, I mean, it actually may sound like boasting, but it needed a set of people willing to put in their time and energy. Not any sort of people but a set of people—for example, Nandan runs a very successful company. Kalpana Kar used to be a part of Tata Administrative Services and Titan. Naresh is a successful architect. Ramesh was Managing Director of a Citibank subsidiary. I run a market research firm that has led to over than six billion dollars. This group of people was willing to take time off from their daily lives, in the prime of their lives, and provide that volunteer energy to an idea like this that is equally critical and important. And, Nandan putting in a million dollars, saying, "Let's hire urban professionals who will be our eyes and ears and will work full time." So if there is a static plan to be done, we unleash five people who are paid professionals, who are paid for from what I call "angel money" to make the idea work. This is a very, very powerful, potent combination. In fact after that lots of people said they wanted to replicate it elsewhere.

You can have different parts of it but to get this whole thing, this jigsaw puzzle, to fall in place it just was a sign of the times and part serendipity that it happened.

WOLDEMARIAM: So yes, I mean, another question I have is sort of back to this question of Krishna and the political impetus. So given that the political impetus was there, what was it about—I mean, was it the case that S.M. Krishna had more political resources than the people before him? Or was he just ideologically more committed? What was it about this individual that allowed him to do things that the people before him didn't?

RAVICHANDAR: *The same thing—he was experienced quite a bit. I think maybe his exposure. He was also a Fulbright Scholar. But more than that I think at some level he realized that the problems that confronted the place were too huge and he could do with assistance from outside. You see prior to that, there was this large feeling that, "We are government and we have to do this; you are civil society or you are a citizen and you are the recipient of services." We were all boxed into various roles at whatever level.*

I think S.M. cared at one level and if you look at that phase, it was also the time where leading politicians, whether it be Tony Blair or the German chancellor, anybody who flex into India, flew into Bangalore before they flew to Delhi because Bangalore was seen as this emerging IT capital. In some sense, it became the symbol of the new India. So you

add world leader after world leader first landing in Bangalore before they went to Delhi. S.M.K., being the chief minister, used to be there at every one of those events and get exposed to the kind of emerging interest that was happening as this new transition was happening.

So I think subliminally, on some level, this kind of exposure, his past background, he got it, I felt that—and with Nandan he had somebody whom he could implicitly trust saying that—I mean I could trust him that he would not try to usurp that authority to do the wrong things. So I think all that played a role. It's not that it was one defining moment that he got it; it was a series. Because we had these summits twice a year, there were intermediate reviews between the summits on what was happening and he had a pulse on where this was headed. And he saw the political capital of what was happening.

You see, afterwards, if you see the election analysis when he lost in 2004—it came down from 115 seats to 65—they said that urban reform doesn't pay any dividends. But if you dissect the data closely, in the state, the Congress Party, S.M.K.'s party, won 65 to 70 out of 220 seats, roughly about 28 to 30% of the seats. But in Bangalore, which was the area where we had the BATF experiment and this thing, he won ten out of 16 seats. So his strike rate in Bangalore was 65 to 70%. In the rest of Karnataka it was less than 30%.

My case says it works. You get the thing? Then in the aggregate, he finally lost power. He actually needed to have similar types of programs statewide and one for the rural and not to be seen too much—his problem was that he got boxed in as a city type. Because what do you do? You get photographed with Tony Blair, you get photographed with the German chancellor and all the visiting VIPs and you're photographed all the time in Bangalore and with BATF, you get boxed in whether you like it or not. So that partly to my mind is something that happened.

Today if you want to take an idea like this forward, say or do the same thing and say the focus of this administration is on slum improvement and I'm having a dedicated taskforce to make sure that the urban poor—it doesn't have to be anything which is even remotely elitist.

WOLDEMARIAM: *One other question. Is there any truth to the claim that maybe there was a concern amongst the political higher ups that—I mean Bangalore's infrastructure, its public services have clearly not kept up with the growth of the city. There was this question of would the tech industry stay in Bangalore if government—if we didn't make government work, right?*

RAVICHANDAR: *Actually it was not that so much as much as the competition between Hyderabad and Bangalore. More than the fact about the investment, there was this rivalry. Chandrababu Naidu was very effective in Hyderabad. The defining moment at that point of time was his ability to get Bill Gates to come and set up a center in Hyderabad. Bill Clinton when he came down went to Hyderabad and not to Bangalore. He had to choose a city and it was Hyderabad that got selected. So those were some of the wake-up calls—that Hyderabad was getting very aggressive.*

So in the larger one I would lose investment in a general area, investment and job creation, I would say Hyderabad. So what was happening in Hyderabad made it imperative that Bangalore needed a

response. At some level the BATF became a kind of a response to what Hyderabad was doing with much greater, better PR (public relations) at that period of time.

WOLDEMARIAM: Is there also any truth—I mean one thing that I’ve heard is something—I mean in creating the BATF and selecting the members that he did, Krishna was interested in the reputations of these individuals and their reputations lending credibility to the endeavor. I mean, was it a strategy, do you think—and particularly because, I mean you were choosing a group of people who were successful but also largely apolitical.

RAVICHANDAR: *Yes, apolitical. But he actually really chose Nandan, because Nandan chose the rest of us. In fact, I don’t know S.M.K. In fact, I would almost say that even at the end of four years, while he physically might have seen me in a meeting we had there, I can’t claim to have known him. I don’t even think he knew my name at the end of 2004. So we were in that sense not the high-profile personalities. Nandan certainly was. So he actually appointed the chairman of the taskforce and the remaining ten people who had some political types and some other well-known people, like Dr. Raja Ramanna. They were all appointed by him.*

So all the heavyweight names were appointed by the system. But ironically the unknown names were the ones who worked the place. The other thing really is, and the success of this whole model is, I can speak for myself, my whole model is based, because I know what is my place under the sun. I am an enabler. It is about the guy who can deliver. I care about outcomes. In due course, if one recognizes that one played a role and you get a little bit of visibility it’s welcome. I mean all human beings like to be recognized but we all—at least I can speak for myself—for me it was always clear that the CEO of the agencies, Jairaj or anybody else, the person I am working for, he is the boss who calls the shots. I am doing my little bit of the part in making this happen.

That’s very important because they’re the guys who need to get credit if you are to be successful.

WOLDEMARIAM: I guess we’ve gone over our time—.

RAVICHANDAR: *No issue. I mean if you wish to ask me a few more outside of BATF or we can talk, whatever.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Thank you. This is an interesting point though that members of the BATF had to be willing to give credit to others?

RAVICHANDAR: *Right.*

WOLDEMARIAM: And in that way you build a coalition for changes, right?

RAVICHANDAR: *Correct.*

WOLDEMARIAM: So looking back on this whole process now, I mean—.

RAVICHANDAR: *Our web site, you must visit it some time, ideasforgov.org.*

WOLDEMARIAM: I’ve heard of this.

RAVICHANDAR: *It's got 50 actionable ideas from my BATF days and I put it out there. The underlying philosophy is, "Please use it and don't say where it came from, just use it."*

WOLDEMARIAM: Right, right. Looking back on this whole process now, what exactly are the big lessons, the big macro lessons? What would you do differently? One thing that you had said earlier is that it's important to use political capital when you have it.

RAVICHANDAR: Yes.

WOLDEMARIAM: At first you had thought let's build a coalition for change, let's move incrementally. Maybe in retrospect you should have just gone for it.

RAVICHANDAR: *Gone for the big bang. You see, political capital, it's one of the learnings when you look back. Political capital is a declining commodity. For example in S.M.K.'s case, he came with huge political capital but two things happened in the state that diminished his capital significantly. One is Veerappan kidnapped a major film star, Raj Kumar. The Veerappan kidnapping sapped a lot of his attention and energy. That did him a fair amount of—set him back. Then we had this river water sharing with Tamil Nadu, the Cauvery issue that was another issue which depleted a fair amount of his political capital. There were a lot of smaller issues. So the political capital and consequently attention to what you want his attention on, all that stuff gets affected.*

So given that, by and large, and we have seen in the recent Obama case also that the only thing that can be said with certainty is that your political capital will go down. Consequently if you are going to bring about change and you are empowered to bring about some change, do as much as possible in the shortest possible time because this is a fast-closing window. That is to my mind the big learning.

Second, we believed incrementalism is better because we wanted to tread softly. But I really believe that if you're clear about what your objectives are, if your conscience is clear about what you're really driving, have the courage to stand up for it and push for it rather than trying to gingerly work your way around. Because if you gingerly work your way around and you come to two, three things that need to be done, you suddenly find you don't have the political capital and the resistance to that has built up significantly.

The same self-assessment scheme two years down the line would not have been possible, but when it got pushed on the day it got pushed, it was again pure chance, it happened. So the point really is, we took two, two and a half years to get the FBAS done, we should have done it in three, six months and pushed it done. We were weary of treading on our toes. The thing is, when you're empowered and you're clear, you still need to manage the politics of the place, between the politicians and the bureaucracy. You need to manage that. But you need to be clear what is it that you want and you have to go for broke in getting that done. Don't say, "This I will keep for next year." It doesn't come. So to my mind that is the second thing in terms of moving quickly and not bothering. Don't go for incremental, go for something bigger and choose your battles up front saying these three things if I put the edifice—for example if I go back and put it—pushing for legislative change on a directly-elected

mayor and metropolitan planning commission and more powers with citizen participation is something that we should have pushed for in the first six months.

He had the legislative strength, it would have gone through and it would have been in place. Today, ten years later, we are still struggling to get that thing. It is still being discussed and debated. But, if you ask me, the big change one could have gone for is to—because we now believe that strengthening the third tier with citizen participation is the way ahead. Move for that legislation up front as the one big legislative change to be done right away.

WOLDEMARIAM: Another question popped to mind, something I've been thinking about is a lot of people have talked to me about the complexity of municipal government in India. You have all these different agencies, you have all these different functions and the functional overlap is extraordinary.

RAVICHANDAR: *Huge.*

WOLDEMARIAM: I'm wondering what sort of challenge did this pose to you. Did you guys find yourselves in a position where you had to adjudicate turf battles between different agencies?

RAVICHANDAR: *Not adjudicate, but all the time turf battles are par for the course. You just have to find what is the best way out to fix this thing. That really to my mind is something that you had to do all the time. I distinctly remember when we were opening the Outer Ring Road which was a BATF project, the police needed to be involved because finally there is traffic management on that road, but the BATF didn't want to deal with the police. But I made a request to Mr. Jerome saying, "Look, it is worthwhile doing one or two joint visits with the police because that shows that you're reaching out and building—because finally the road is going to be handed over for them to manage." He finally agreed and we did those visits.*

Later on when he wanted to demolish some buildings, he needed police assistance during that thing and they also were forthcoming. So you have to forge these partnerships where the natural inclination may not be there to do it. That's—the biggest value of a platform like BATF is irrespective of the directly admitted mayor, whenever it comes, the biggest need in cities today is integration across multiple agencies with overlapping jurisdictions. So if you can play the role of that integrator in whatever way you have done well. So integration is one big, big need that gets played by something like this. What it does also is, if you see the public space it is all about spending in millions of dollars and announcements and projects, then people can't even wrap their arms around it. It is like a trillion-dollar deficit. Nobody knows what the hell that big hole is about. That's the kind of spending in projects.

I will have a metro rail for 2.5 billion dollars. "Oh it looks huge." Nobody talks the language of outcomes. I expect over a period of time that the politics of the place, politicians will realize that the better way to garner votes is to talk the language of outcomes. That you will spend less time on our roads. I promise that more Bangaloreans will cross the road without losing their life. What I mean really is outcomes in terms of—therefore all actions that you do on buses, on Volvo, on speed-breakers,

everything, is geared toward delivering those kinds of outcome metrics which citizens are aware of. I'm an optimist so I really believe that we will get to an era where outcome kind of language—but for that they have to deliver on the outcomes.

To my mind to deliver on the outcomes these kinds of public/private initiatives, etcetera, if you craft together, you increase the odds of being able to deliver on the outcomes. Therefore, outcomes as promises are the kind of thing you might well go to.

WOLDEMARIAM: Excellent, just one more question and we'll wrap it up in a moment. Another political question I have is something I've heard from others—that one characteristic of Karnataka's politics, at least in the 1990s, was a lot of change in chief ministers. In particular the sort of—the political weight the chief minister had in some way was diminished by intra-party challenges.

RAVICHANDAR: *Coalitions and all that stuff.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Yes, coalitions. I'm wondering, what kind of political capital did Krishna himself have? I mean, it doesn't seem like he faced these kind of intra-party challenges—.

RAVICHANDAR: *Not so much, he was—see, he had support from the central party in Delhi for Congress and he had a relatively free hand which is very important. Since he was the state president of the party that took the party to the election and won he had a certain legitimacy also which I think helped because he was the person in charge of the party when they were out of power and when he became the Chief Minister.*

Let's face it: he also has a very suave personality. That kind of thing worked very well with the kind of thing that Bangalore was becoming on the world stage in terms of—and that also helped. But clearly, the fact that he didn't have to deal with too many factions and all those kinds of pressures definitely allowed him to run the ship in a way that he wanted to.

WOLDEMARIAM: Excellent, excellent. I thank you for your time. I think these are most of the issues I wanted to get at. Are there other things that you'd like to say or things that you'd like to mention that are on your mind that we haven't addressed?

RAVICHANDAR: *Let me say as far as the Bangalore Agenda Task Force and that whole experiment is concerned, I think we have covered a fair amount of ground—and I'll send you a lot of literature.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Please do.

RAVICHANDAR: *I'll send you a test mail, I'll confirm that you received it and then I'll start sending you a fair amount of material. I'll also send you material on City Connect because that is my current passion, I'll just send that to you. I know that that is not the focus of this particular exercise. This is more in the context of urban governance. The other thing that strikes me of the BATF days, I think I gave you what the success determinants are. I also have a one page note on why BATF closed down. I'll send you all that stuff. We have discussed many of those points.*

WOLDEMARIAM: I've seen a brief article you had on the airport and the importance of keeping up the old airport.

RAVICHANDAR: *The old airport—that's of course part of new role in City Connect. My belief is that the state is better served with two airports. And a lot of articles are written for Civil Society magazine of late.*

WOLDEMARIAM: That would be excellent.

RAVICHANDAR: *All the learnings. There is another; I can't help mentioning this. I told Nandan actually in 2004 when this happened, pre-2000 personally speaking for myself, I was this apathetic Indian citizen, criticizing things but going around like a parasite using the system and maybe having pretty bad civic manners on the way one drove, handled garbage or whatever. Then 2000, BATF and all the subsequent urban exposure happened. Then 2004 when we shut down I told Nandan, we need a "Men in Black" kind of solution. I want to be zapped back to the pre-2000 era. I want to forget 2000 to 2004 for only one reason. We have gone into the belly of the beast. We have seen what that looks like and I know when we're going to be outside where we're going to find it difficult for the system to deliver because we've been into the belly of the beast. I'd rather be ignorant and forget the last four years. So I can go back to a 1999 pre-alien stage and happily live my life again. So I said do you have a zap gun and you can zap us? He said boss, there's no zap gun. We have to take this forward.*

WOLDEMARIAM: Thank you for your time.

RAVICHANDAR: Okay.