

Stories of

some lives

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I am not much of a morning paper person; not that I follow the evening news. An occasional glance at the paper is more than enough for me. And I generally avoid news magazines because, more often than not, they highlight the dismal side of life and things. And yet, I couldn't resist reading this utterly shocking, chilling story on the Maoist regime in Jharkhand. They've enlisted a child brigade and have children as young as six joining the army. Some children join voluntarily, some on the instruction of their parents and some are abducted - eventually everyone fits in and is trained to undertake all sorts of tasks, including killings. Most of the children who join on their own do so to take revenge on their fathers for having abandoned the family. And, sooner or later, most of them succeed. Literature is distributed to incite young minds to supposedly fight the injustice in the system.

Adnan Patrawala has become a household name since his murder a couple of months ago. That youngsters with good future prospects could kill someone who regarded them as friends just to make some quick money was shocking to say the least. I tried hard to swallow the lump that had formed in my throat. Every other day, there's a bomb blast in some part of the

world. What has become of man after several thousand years of evolution, if you can call it that! What is the world coming to, I wondered, when my mind zoomed in closer to home and the stories I've heard.

Heart-warming stories of love and kindness, in destitution and adversity. Stories of much warmth, affection and magnanimity. Stories of self-respect, gratitude and loyalty. Of a middle-aged man employed as a driver, who when queried says he has four children. Of the four, two are his own and two are children of a deceased relative. But on his meagre income, he is looking after them as his own. Of a door-to-door beautician deserted by her husband, robbed of all her money and jewellery, left with the responsibility of raising two children. She finds in her the strength to deal with the situation and later takes up the onus of giving her niece an opportunity to live and graduate from a city college. Someone who can barely make ends meet finds it in her heart to accommodate an extra person, so she can get a better chance at life. Of a woman who works as a housemaid and travels a couple of hours to get to the house where she works. After having moved out of the locality, it would have been easier to look for a job closer to where she lives. For it isn't the salary that makes her undertake that commute every morning, but the loyalty and gratitude for the family that has helped her in times of need. I don't work for the money, she says. If it was that, I would've quit long ago.

They are the Balus, the Ranis and the Manabais we all know, the people we come across in our everyday lives. While newspapers, magazines and sensational stories make you shudder at the thought of the future, they are the hope for humanity, keepers of noble souls, the respite from a misled population. They are the unsung heroes who'll never make headlines or find their faces flashed on magazine covers, but they make the world a better place. They are the good who outnumber the bad. Behind every face is a story, often a noble one. Read on...