

TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL

PM To Lead Applause For India's Unsung Heroes

Who's Who To Gather For TOI Awards

The life of a warrior for change can be tough and the road lonely. Small victories mean the world to the dispossessed people they work for, but to the rest these daily crusaders are invisible. This Sunday, Gandhiji's birthday, The Times of India will seek, in its own small way, to show India's unsung heroes that they are not alone – that the nation is with them.

And Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will be with us to applaud and inspire the winners of the first Times of India Social Impact Awards at a simple ceremony in the capital on Sunday. Joining the PM and the Who's Who of India, will be beneficiaries of the organizations selected for the Awards, most of whom have never travelled beyond the boundaries of their district.

Director, writer and actor Farhan Akhtar will host the evening. "To receive recognition from such a respected institution as the Times Group in the presence of the PM himself is a big achievement for the winners, and this will definitely encourage other organisations too," Akhtar said. **World's most powerful pvt banker at TOI awards**

Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of JP Morgan, often described as the world's most powerful private banker, is travelling across the globe for a cause that is deserving of everyone's precious time. It is only fitting that the children, women and men whose lives have been transformed by the work done by the Awardees should be an integral part of the ceremony.

Maya Nishad, the gram pradhan of Ahata village in Uttar Pradesh, who has never before been on a bus or crossed the boundaries of Bahraich, says she will make the journey because the district administration's efforts to improve drinking water and sanitation has transformed her life.

Arvind Patel is also a beneficiary. He is today managing director of a Gandhinagar-based company with a Rs 100-crore turnover and exports to 22 countries. But in 1974, Arvind was a demoralised 14-year-old boy who had just failed his Class 8 exams. But one summer at the Vikram A Sarabhai Community Science Centre, Ahmedabad, set his mind alight.

His academic performance turned around, he went on to become an electronics engineer and most importantly, he became an innovator. It's also fitting that mandolin maestro U Srinivas will perform Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram, Gandhi's most beloved bhajan, at the ceremony.

The hunt for the men and women making real change began six months ago.

Soon thereafter, TOI invited applications from NGOs, government organizations and the social responsibility wings of corporates in five categories: livelihoods, advocacy and empowerment, education, health and the environment. Online applications were accepted between June 7 and July 17 this year through a dedicated website (socialimpactawards.com).



Lakshmiammal, a tribal woman from Vellore, went to a night school run by the Srinivasan Services Trust and has never looked back. She runs a small business of making furniture out of the lantana plant



Arvind Patel was a 14-year-old who had just failed school, when he discovered the Vikram A Sarabhai Community Science Centre. It invigorated his mind and turned him into a successful innovator



Bhaniya Muaria from Vakner village in eastern Madhya Pradesh knows the value of a piece of paper. The Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra got him a title deed to a small plot of land that now feeds his family

