

# *Always the Real Thing?*



The ~~Coke~~ *Real* Side of Life

# Who Are We?



Ayesha Kazim - University of Maryland,  
College Park

Rakesh Mistry - University of Maryland,  
College Park

Rahul Suresh - Rice University

Sowmya Paturi - University of Connecticut

# InSPIRE



**I**ndia  
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**E**xploration

# *Coca-Cola and India:* *A Brief History*

**1956**

Coke comes to  
India

**1977**

Foreign  
Exchange  
Act  
implemented

Coke leaves India

# *Coca-Cola and India:* *A Brief History*

**1989**

Pepsi approved  
to re-enter India

**1993**

Coca-Cola  
re-enters  
India after  
government  
approval

**1999**

Coca-Cola buys Parle

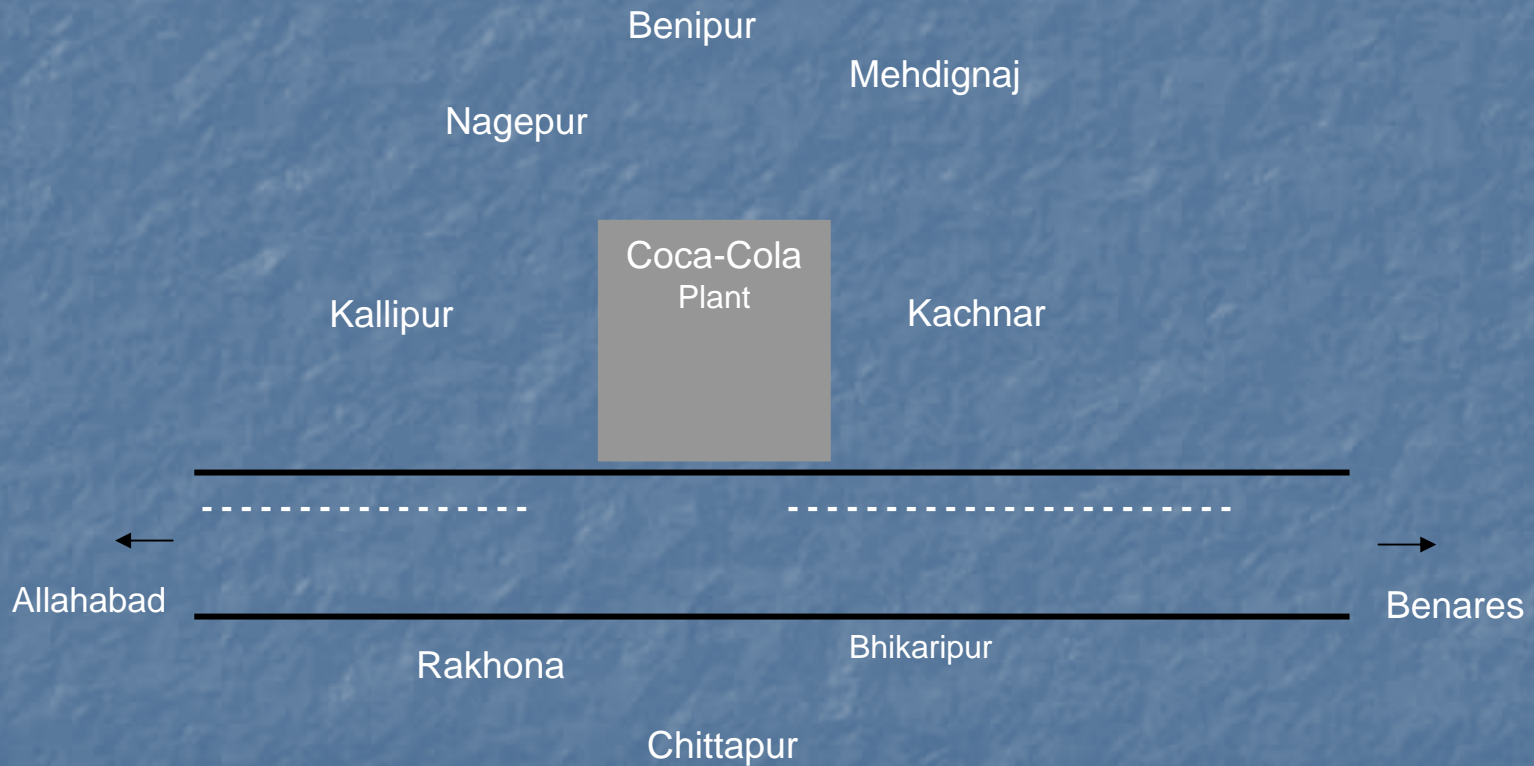
# *Mehdiganj*

- Once a successful weaving village
- 10,000 villagers
- Pottery making and farming are other means of livelihood in the village



**In comes  
Coca-Cola**

# *Coke's Factory Location: In Relation To The Villages Near Varanasi*



# *The Issues*

- Main Issue: Coca-Cola uses at least 500,000 liters of groundwater per day
- Other Issues
  - Illegal occupation of land
  - Toxic wastes dumped in surrounding areas ruining fields
  - Violations – stamp duty and labor laws



# *Coca-Cola Headquarters in Delhi:*

## *Our Visit*



- Met with Kalyan Ranjan, Senior Manager, Deepak Jolly, - VP, Public Affairs, and 6 others Coca-Cola representatives – June 13, 2007

# *What Did They Say?*

- Believe that Coca-Cola has gone above and beyond their responsibilities
- Created employee workgroups
- Protest movements are instigated by outside groups
- Said that 85% of the water has been replenished and by 2009, 100% of water will be

# *What Did They Say?*

- Nationalistic because Thums Up is #1
- Skirted around direct questions when we asked them
- Told us to visit the Mehdiganj plant when we were there



# Lok Samiti



Lok Samiti performing before a village meeting

- Group of dynamic youth
- Literal meaning: People's Committee
- Inspired by Jayprakash Narayan
- Embedded in the community. Mediate problems.
- Organized a People's Movement against Coca-Cola when they found out the damage that the plant was doing
- Now, they are part of a worldwide movement protesting Coca-Cola.

# Lok Samiti



Lok Samiti also performs plays for villagers depicting common problems that they face. This can range from caste, to women inequality, to the issue with Coke. Their intention is to have the audience realize what the current issues are help them find ways to resolve those problems.

# Our Experience with Lok Samiti

- Treated as friend's and not visitors.
- Didn't accept money, and financed by their gratitude.
- Despite modest backgrounds, they have been able to make a national and international impact
- Sincere and dedicated – could leave village for high-paying jobs, but do not
- 50% women and 50% men



Rakesh, Sowmya, Rahul and Ayesha with Lok Samiti's Nandlal Master (middle)

# Factory Visit

- Taking up Mr. Jolly's offer, we hiked 3 km to the factory
- Denied access into factory
- Called Kalyan – did not help



InSPIRErants Rakesh and Sowmya in front of the gated Coke factory

- Guard told us that plant was not operating, even though we could see that it was

# The Movement - Mehdiganj

- January 2004 – 500 march against Coca-Cola at World Social Forum
- November 2004 – 1000+ peaceful protesters are attacked by police outside the plant in Mehdiganj
- January 2005 – Over 500 community members march to condemn the violence
- June 2006 – 3 month vigil in front of plant along with hunger strike
- September 2006 – 3 week “Water Rights” march to Delhi
- June 2007 – Over 200 protested in front of Varanasi’s DM’s office



# The Bigger Issue



## Water Privatization

- Whose water is it?
- Is it okay for water to be bought and sold?
- Or does the water belong to the community who lives there and who has been safeguarding it for generations?
- Lok Samiti believes water belongs to the people, and therefore is pushing for ALL bottling plants in India to close down

# The Movement - Worldwide



- Has been accused of killing union leaders in Columbia
- Have infringed upon water rights of communities all over the world
- Benefiting from child labor in El Salvador
- Several universities in solidarity have banned Coca-Cola products including:

- NYU
- Rutgers University
- College of DuPage
- Univ. of Guelph

- Michigan
- Santa Clara University
- Smith College
- Swarthmore College

# More questions?

- Check out these sites for more information:
  - <http://www.indiaresource.org>
  - <http://www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org/docs/cokeunifiedpublication.pdf>
  - <http://www.killercoke.com>
  - <http://www.tsl.pomona.edu/index.php?article=1428>
  - InSPIRE @ [www.summerinindia.org](http://www.summerinindia.org)

# Sources

- [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/3125520.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3125520.stm)
- [http://www.ashanet.org/austin/mehdiganj/visit\\_reports/shira\\_wolf\\_2003\\_04.html](http://www.ashanet.org/austin/mehdiganj/visit_reports/shira_wolf_2003_04.html)
- [http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/2006/a\\_letter\\_from\\_coke\\_and\\_a\\_reply.html](http://www.thesouthasian.org/archives/2006/a_letter_from_coke_and_a_reply.html)
- <http://www.ashanet.org/austin/mehdiganj/faq.html#q3>
- [http://www.ashanet.org/austin/mehdiganj/visit\\_reports/water\\_table\\_status\\_report.pdf](http://www.ashanet.org/austin/mehdiganj/visit_reports/water_table_status_report.pdf)
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