

A ROLE MODEL for women around the world, the gracefully beautiful Rohini Nilekani is equally at ease with her many avatars: the founder of three not-for-profit organisations focused on water and healthcare, education and children's books; the sparkling author of both racy thrillers and insightful books that cross-link the diverse issues facing the nation; and wife of Nandan Nilekani, who now heads the Unique Identification Authority of India after a sterling innings at Infosys.

Rohini Nilekani's new book, *Uncommon Ground* (Penguin), is an example of her sharp intelligence and tested networking skills being put to work to pull off a seemingly impossible feat — getting together the doyens of the corporate world with their critics from civil society. Business leaders talk to — and not talk at — each other with the noble objective of finding a common platform for sharing ideas and finding solutions, exploring eight themes that now define the country's socio-political

*"We need more of dialogue," says Rohini Nilekani, author of the book, Uncommon Ground.*



# Bringing the Indian Industry Close to Conscience Keepers

and economic scene.

Nilekani shares the credit for her ground-breaking work. "I am not an expert on any of these issues. Nor have I claimed to be one. All I have attempted to do is to provide a platform for dia-

logue for apparent adversaries to come together and listen to each other, share ideas and build links. As citizens we have to ensure that the *sarkar* and the bazaar do not collude against us."

When asked whether she shares the widespread view that the government is increasingly getting distanced from everyday ground realities, Nilekani defends the dispensation.

"I cannot make such sweeping statements," she says. "The state is constantly in

BETWEEN  
THE LINES

By Angshukanta Chakraborty

contact with the corporate world and the civil society, but what we urgently need is to increase the points of contact. People want to be in touch with the government, and I don't mean just the people in Delhi, the capital, but people residing in any corner of India."

The outcome of her endeavour to cross-connect conflicting voices is a series of riveting dialogues between the newsmakers of our time. From mega-entrepreneurs such as Mukesh Ambani, Sunil Mittal and Anand Mahindra, Nilekani extracts the twists and turns of their dealings with the government, and their take on the market and the people.

From the nation's conscience-keepers like Aruna Roy, Medha Patkar and Sunita Narain, she manages to draw out the middle grounds that can be taken without destabilising the economy or bringing down the growth rate.

Brushing off the tags that trail behind her, such as 'philanthrocapitalist' or even 'philanthroglobalist', Nilekani says, "Businesses are definitely relooking at themselves and not just doing CSR. But it is a long haul." Many in the business fraternity have visions for a prosperous India that is also inclusive with a fair distribution of wealth, and she's certainly trying her best to give it shape.

Author, journalist, educationist and social entrepreneur, Nilekani effortlessly balances her many responsibilities. She's now also a facilitator of dialogues across interest groups and she's just loving it. But, "The media has a huge role to play," she cautions. We cannot agree more!