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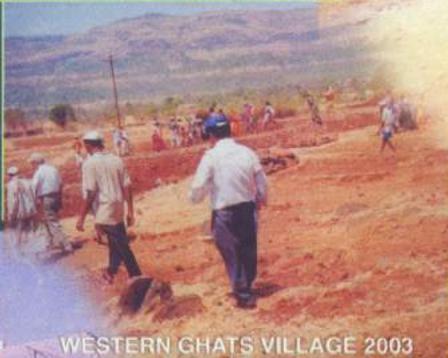
RURAL SOCIETY AND PHILANTHROPY



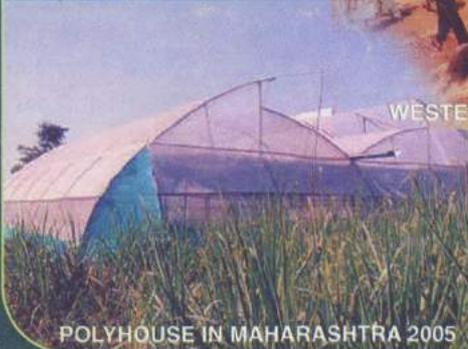
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POLYHOUSE IN MAHARASHTRA 2005

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you want to see in the world”
- Mahatma Gandhi**

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Rural India and Philanthropy

The 'Indian village' has been looked upon as the evil embodiment of social injustice; exploitation by some while others searched for a fetish of indigenous democracy in it. Away from the partisan perspectives, one indisputable truth about the village it is that it has served as the basis of social organization in Indian society since ancient times, largely called as **gram**. It was part of an intricate network of social, economic, political and ideological institutions and organizations, each operating at varying scales and performing distinct functions. The village was at times endowed with certain privileges; often political, religious authority was vested in it and it smoothly went about organizing economic activities. The relationship was dynamic; and the role of the little community was amenable to change.

Even today, village serves as the predominant form of social organization in our society. The 2001 census showed that the total number of villages in India is 6,38,000 and there was a substantial increase in their absolute number during the preceding decade. This is in spite of the noticeable increase in the percentage of urban population during the same period. Experts may try to rationalise this, but one cannot overlook the fact that the village community and rural India is a solid entity that development managers, policy makers, entrepreneurs and political leaders will have to reckon with. We cannot make the strides towards a prosperous society unless we address the problems that beset our villages. History has shown us that the little community was responsible for the well being of its members. Charity and Philanthropy were an intrinsic part of

the governance system associated with the community. In case of subversion of the customary laws that ensured delivery of charitable and philanthropic duties by the local officials, the wronged members had the freedom to approach the higher authority, mostly

from the editor's desk



the king to invoke justice. Even today, one witnesses village assemblies like **gaonki** performing altruistic role.

The importance of philanthropy especially forms of venture philanthropy and strategic philanthropy for development and endurance of villages in the modern context, is still largely an unexplored subject. We need to move beyond basic philanthropic vibes and explore the potential for strategic philanthropy to support innovative solutions to the huge problems in rural India. More than getting too possessive about the past glory, the need is for a pragmatic view about philanthropy in rural India. The need is to think how best we can blend the past with the modern approaches and solutions. Thus, the current issue takes a historical and cross-cultural view about philanthropy. On the one side, we have tried to inform our readers about the traditional forms of philanthropy in Indian society; forms of community charity that existed even in the tribal society, which have gone largely unnoticed by the mainstream; and on the other side we have revisited relatively new forms of community philanthropy such as community foundations which have begun to make a mark in Western philanthropy and hold relevance to our development problems.

Dr. Sandeep Deshmukh

Community Foundations for Rural Poverty Alleviation

By Pushpa Sundar

A strong civil society is built upon, and draws its strength from people who work together for the betterment of that society. One expression of such work is community philanthropy. It refers to the act of individual citizens contributing money and goods, or volunteering their time and skills to promote the betterment of the community in which they live. Community philanthropy arises both from the impulse of generosity as well as shared values of self reliance and social cohesion. A vehicle for community philanthropy which has become very popular globally is a community foundation.

A community foundation is a tax exempt, independent, locally managed, publicly supported, philanthropic organization, established and operated as a permanent collection of endowed funds for the long term benefit of a defined geographical area such as a city or a village. It is a means to build, over time, substantial funds for the community, through large and small contributions. These are not spent but invested to secure a steady stream of income to help meet the community's charitable needs – from primary education to vocational training to art. In a sense, the community foundation serves as a savings account for the community. They are governed by a volunteer board of citizens broadly reflective of the communities they serve, and are professionally managed.

The core values which underpin CFs include, impartiality, mutual

Community Foundation

Community foundations are grant-making organizations that:

- seek to improve the quality of life for all people in a defined geographic area;
- are independent from control or influence by other organizations, governments or donors;
- are governed by a board of citizens broadly reflective of the communities they serve;
- make grants to other nonprofit groups to address a wide variety of emerging and changing needs in the community;
- seek to build a permanent resource for the community, most often through the creation of endowed funds from a wide range of donors, including local citizens, corporations, governments, and other foundations and nonprofits;
- provide services to donors to help them achieve their philanthropic goals;
- engage in a broad range of community leadership and partnership activities, serving as catalysts, convenors, collaborators and facilitators to solve problems and develop solutions to important community issues;
- have open and transparent policies and practices concerning all aspects of their operations; and
- are accountable to the community by informing the general public about their purposes, activities, and financial status on a regular basis.

(Source: 2005 Community Foundation Global Status Report)

responsibility, inclusiveness, accessibility and accountability.¹

Typically a community foundation plays three roles and serves three constituencies: **Roles:**

1. They pool the gifts\ donations\ grants of many donors to create a permanent income earning endowment, which will always be there for the benefit of their communities. In the process they offer donors, small and big, a variety of means and services to meet their charitable goals. For instance, they offer the possibility of creating individual funds under the main CF either named after a donor or for supporting a particular field such as education or health. They also offer donors a variety of services, and help them make wise choices.

2. They use the income earned by invested funds to give grants to a wide range of community groups working for the benefit of that community according to defined priorities; the original investment is left to grow over time.

3. They give leadership to the community, bringing together people from all sectors of society to identify and address local issues.

In sum, community foundations focus on local asset development, local control, and local decision making.

Constituencies:

- Donors, who are offered a variety of options through which they can achieve their charitable objectives;
- Communities, which benefit from the assets created by the use of the



community funds and from actions aimed at improving the quality of life in the community; and

- Charitable organizations which work in the community, and who receive grants from the community foundation for their development and welfare work.

The community foundation offers several advantages as an organizational model, not only for mobilizing local resources for local development, but also for uniting and building communities, and providing leadership for community driven development.

Since the first modern community foundation was established in Cleveland, USA, in 1914, their numbers have swelled so that today there are more than 1,100 CFs spread over 40 countries. Though the majority are in the USA, at least 37% are outside it. The fastest growth has been in Germany and Russia, which have together witnessed the establishment of 65 foundations in less than a decade, with many more in the offing.² However, it has not caught the imagination of either the public, civil society or policy planners in developing countries to the same extent as it has in the developed world. At last count (2004), though exact statistics are not available, there were very few in South America, only 11 CFs in different countries of Africa, and 12 in Asia, including three in India. Almost all of them owe their existence to external intervention by international funders who have promoted the idea and provided seed money. The low count in developing countries, CFs is partly a reflection of the fact that though CF-like indigenous models exist in many of the countries, they are not recognized

as CFs or called by such a name, since they do not approximate to the full range of features found in the classical Western model; partly it is due to the fact that a different socio-cultural context requires a different promotional and development strategy. Significantly, a majority of the community foundations in the world are urban or urban based, though there is no break up available of the urban – rural divide. Even in developed countries, there are very few rural community foundations, and



even those are not known to be a successful. For instance according to a study based on a survey of community foundations in the US by the Aspen Institute's Community Strategic Group, the community foundation respondents that serve the highest rural poverty indicated that the levels of rural development philanthropy did not keep pace with the size of their rural service area. Not only the percentage of rural board members and rural donors each averaged considerably beneath the needs of the average rural service area; but that the levels of rural grantmaking and program were also very low. The key challenge to rural development philanthropy was not the rural location but poverty.³ In developing countries, the number of rural CFs are even fewer. Mostly some of the urban based CFs serve a rural constituency. For instance the Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation in South Africa serves 1.2 million people, 80% of whom live in poor rural areas.

The newly established Pune-based Nava Maharashtra Community Foundation has begun its grant-making programme in a few rural districts.

Using India as a case in point, this paper explores why, in spite of a slew of experiments with different organizational forms for rural poverty alleviation, the community foundation model has found no place in either government or civil society programmes for community driven development in poor rural areas.

It suggests that this could be due partly to the specifics of the philanthropic context, and partly due to a disconnect between development theory and the assumptions which have prompted the growth of community foundations worldwide. It concludes that in spite of the many constraints in the way, community foundations deserve to be promoted more proactively by funders, policy makers and civil society organizations alike. Also instead of a one size fits all strategy, a more fruitful approach would be a context specific strategy which builds on existing indigenous initiatives. It is hypothesized that one major reason why community foundations have not received much attention could be owing to the fact that till recent years, the emphasis in development thinking was on effective delivery of developmental inputs and services rather than on the funding of such inputs or costs of delivery, since funding from government or foreign donors was taken for granted. The result was experimentation first with different forms of community organizations for delivery of development inputs, and later to ensure participation by the intended beneficiaries to make development sustainable. No efforts



were made, till recently, to engage local communities in development efforts through local resource mobilization or fund raising from the public at large. Though there are enough instances of traditional fund mobilization for common community activities, this was not built on due to reliance on only the two main sources of funds, viz govt. and foreign donors.

Another reason could be that though most NGOs and donors purport to support processes of participatory development, they prefer to retain real power and control of resources themselves, instead of giving resources directly to communities for them to manage.

It could also be that, as NC Saxena has pointed out, NGOs who were well intentioned and started as effective bridge between communities and government (and donors), have by now acquired permanent space for themselves, and need large amount of funds to sustain their establishments. They spend more time in mobilizing donor money than in mobilizing communities. Transferring money and real power to communities would in many ways, undermine their own power and existence.⁴

Community Foundations and Community Driven Development

Advantages of the CF Model For Community Driven Development: Community driven development (CDD) is a process by which community groups organize and take action to achieve their common goals, in the context of an enabling policy environment and with support from responsive institutions

(i.e. private suppliers, local government, and national agencies) and by which they assume control and authority over decisions and resources in development projects which affect their lives. This means reversing control and accountability from central authorities to community organizations in the initiation, planning, implementation, operation, maintenance and evaluation of development projects, with other agencies playing a supportive role. (World Bank, 2002) Moreover, it has to be recognized that CDD is context driven and thus requires diversity in approach and evolution over time, and that different types of institutional arrangements regarding roles and responsibilities of actors are required in different circumstances for purposes of sustainability, social inclusion. (World Bank Participation Sourcebook 2002)



It is believed that greater local resource mobilization and reinvestment in the local economy would be important outcomes of CDD, and a lead indicator of CDD is the extent to which communities manage internal and external funds themselves.

The CF has many advantages as an organizational form for community driven development:

- Since it is meant for the betterment of the entire geographical community such as a village, a city or a district or a part of a city (e.g. an urban slum) and not only a sectional grouping (round occupation, caste, gender), it can build social cohesion, leading to team effort for the betterment of all.
- It has a potential for mobilizing local community resources to meet community needs by encouraging the philanthropic spirit.
- It creates social capital by strengthening bonds of reciprocity.
- By making an alternate source of funds available for planned development it encourages self reliance rather than exclusive dependence on government or any other outside agency for developmental funds, democratic decision making, transparency and accountability.
- It encourages group action for common betterment, since grants are made only to groups and to meet community rather than individual needs.
- It puts resources in the hands of local communities for their disposal on community projects selected by them. If the management committee includes marginalized people including women, it can give them power and improve their status.

- It can promote leadership from within the community, and can equip community leaders with a variety of skills, such as banking, account keeping, maintenance of records, project planning and implementation and so on.
- It is a model which can challenge more traditional aid and development delivery mechanisms by providing donors a channel direct to the community instead of through an NGO or departmental subsidies. Resources are given directly to a community to manage, rather than through an intermediary. Although most NGOs and donors purport to support processes of participatory development, real power and control of resources is retained. Many a time, money routed through NGOs is

spent on organizing the poor. It does not directly reach the community for whom it is meant, nor does it give them a chance to make their own decisions about it or to control its use.⁵ It thus offers the possibility of arms length funding by government and large institutional donors, like the World Bank or international foundations which additionally have the advantage of being timely, flexible and responsive to local needs.

- Since it is located in the community of users, and owned by them, it has the potential for ensuring accountability to its constituency, instead of some distant bureaucracy, governmental or otherwise.
- At the same time, it offers a mechanism for bringing in money from outsiders to the community, such as remittances from citizens overseas; from large foundations, especially international donors, who cannot give money to small unregistered groups and grassroots

initiatives because of internal or external restrictions, and high transaction costs; and international funders like the World Bank to whom they offer the possibility of being able to sustain the tempo of anti-poverty programmes begun under Bank loans.

- A further advantage is that it offers an opportunity for involving the private sector in local development. With the growth of interest in corporate social responsibility, companies are seeking ways in which they can contribute to community development, and the CF model offers an ideal vehicle for this purpose, since they can create named funds for their own companies and do not need to create own infrastructure to carry out community development programmes around their area.
- Finally, it also offers a vehicle to the non resident diaspora to contribute to the development of their places of origin.

Footnotes: 1 Suzanne Feurt quoted in Building the Worldwide Community

- Foundation Movement, CFC Canada, Ottawa, April 2000
- 2 2004 Community Foundation Global Status Report, WINGS, Brussels, 2004
- 3 "RDP Baseline Survey: Findings and Next Steps", Aspen Institute's Community Strategy Group, sourced from the Internet, date not given.
- 4 N.C, Saxena, "NGOs and the State in India. An Uncomfortable Relationship", in Common Cause, National Foundation for India, N. Delhi, 2002., pp 97-98.
- 5 Anton Simanowitz, "Community Participation\ Community-driven," Papers of the 23rd EWDC Conference on Water and Sanitation For All: Partnerships and Innovations, Durban, South Africa, 1997.

• *Mrs Pushpa Sundar is Director Emeritus of Sampradaan Indian Centre for Philanthropy. (Excerpt from a Paper titled: Community Foundations for Rural Poverty Alleviation in India, presented by Pushpa Sundar at an international symposium on "Community Foundations" held at Berlin in December 2004.)*

Located in Pabal, a village approximately 70 kms from Pune, Vigyan Ashram is a center of Pune-based Indian Institute of Education (IIE), an institution well known in the field of non formal education. A scientist turned educationalist Late Dr. Shrinath Kalbag joined the institute to start Vigyan Ashram in 1983 to find out solution to the problem of rural dropout students. Over the years, the Ashram has developed a complete program for giving training to the youth in rural and urban areas. Today it boasts of turning 800 dropouts into entrepreneurs. With the help of dropout students, Vigyan Ashram has developed several innovative technologies and successfully commercialized them. For its efforts in the field of non-formal education, the ashram was recently awarded by the India Literacy Board. To increase the pace and quality of the education delivery system, the ashram has adopted information technology. Many government and private organization including "CAPART (Min of rural development), "Dept of Science & Technology" "Sir Dorabaji Tata Trust" "Hindustan

Lever", and individual donors, have supported the program of the ashram. Pabal is also home to one of six worldwide MIT Fab Labs, or fabrication laboratories that try to build "everything from anything". Pabal's Fab Lab is India's second after Bithoor in Uttar Pradesh. There is one each in Ghana, Norway, Boston (US) and Costa Rica, all part of MIT's Media Lab tech outreach project. MIT first set up a small lab in 1992, at Vigyan Ashram.

On March 18 this year, MIT upgraded it to a full-fledged Fab Lab at a cost of \$200,000. Manned today by school dropouts and underprivileged children,

the Fab Lab is a collection of high-tech tools that can be used to fabricate instruments of any utility and configuration. One of the major innovations of Vigyan Ashram is its Rural Development Education System. It emphasises on 'Learning while doing, in real life situation' and involves doing community service work in real life as part of education, thereby integrating education with development. Dr.Kalbag was the first to adapt this philosophy into a successfully running program.

Know Your NGO Vigyan Ashram



Little Community Shows the Way

By Dr Sandeep Deshmukh



In the early 20th century, some great anthropologists came out with the concept of 'little community' as one of the basic units of social organization and transmission of organic culture. The model served to explain many of the unfamiliar phenomena in the non-Western society to the Western eye. The Little Community -- more commonly known as village -- as a social, political and cultural unit always existed since ancient times in India. It is a point of debate among the

academicians whether it was central to the social life of people of this country or just served as the lowest rung of the social - political hierarchy?

To a contemporary development practitioner and philanthropist, it is a challenge embodying contradictory forces of social change. The living village of today's India very much carries the prescriptive structures of a traditional society but also at the same time serves as a vehicle of social mobilization for collective welfare and modernization.

There are plenty of examples of village serving as bedrock of social change in modern India. In fact the first Five-Year-Plan of the country focused on 'community development' as a major

point of anchorage for the rapid development of rural parts of our country.

Today we have the more famous examples of village folks taking over their own development. Shri Anna Hazare's Ralegan-Sidhhi in Maharashtra and path-breaking work on water conservation done by people of Alwar region in Rajasthan under the leadership of Shri Rajendrasingh ji, are two such examples.

However, our country's rural landscape is also dotted by little, faceless communities who have accomplished internal revolution through collective leadership and enterprise. One such community named Gahunje exists at the

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Highlights of Global Community Foundation Development in 2004

- 1,175 community foundations have been identified in 46 countries.
- The number of community foundations has grown by 5% in one year; the number of countries has increased by 9%.
- 154 additional community foundations have been identified as being in formation.
- The number of community foundations in Canada continues to grow, but the numbers reported in the UK and the US are in a steady state.
- 40% of community foundations globally exist outside the US, up from 37.5% last year and 34% in the prior year.
- The number of community foundations in the UK and Canada represents only 42% of

the community foundations formed outside the US, down from 47.5% last year and 52% the year before.

- The number of community foundations outside the UK, Canada and the US is 274, which represents a one-year growth rate of 24%.
- Germany and Australia show the greatest growth in numbers, growing by 33% and 47% respectively in one year.
- Countries in Africa and Thailand in Southeast Asia especially are showing a lot of new activity around community foundation formation.
- Community foundation practitioners from around the globe came together for the first time to participate in Community

- foundations: Symposium on a global movement, 2-4 December 2004 in Berlin, a recognition of the increasingly global nature of community foundation development and of how far the community foundation movement has progressed in the last 30 years.
- Not only are community foundations located world over, they have become a global movement that is increasingly interconnected and helping to spread the concept into new parts of the world.
- Community foundations are beginning to have significant impact worldwide as their numbers and resources increase.

(Source: 2005 Community Foundation Global Status Report)



Little Community...

Continued from page 7

fringe of rural hinterland of Maval Tehsil in Pune district of Maharashtra. Few kilometers away, begins the fringe of the industrial city of Pune.

On a visit to this village, a senior representative of a donor organization described it as a rogue community. It was a community fraught with internal dissension, violence and squalor. Everybody thought that like so many other faceless villages, one day Gahunje too would also vanish in the urban ocean of an industrial city. The villagers nurtured hostility towards Bajaj Auto as they thought the company always favored the neighboring villages when it came to corporate philanthropy. In fact, there was a time when the villagers got together and asked the officials of Jankidevi Bajaj Gram Vikas Sanstha (JBGVS), the voluntary organization sponsored by the company, to stop working in the village for the good of everybody. The resistance from the villagers further strengthened the resolve of JBGVS volunteers to develop Gahunje as a 'model village'.

Integrating empathy with scientific approach to social mobilization helped in bolstering the morale of the villagers and gradually changed their attitude towards the company.

The first taste of empowerment was experienced by the women of the village who caught hold of the government engineer to complete the pending drinking water scheme in record time. Today, Gahunje is one of the few villages in the country, which receives clean water thanks to pooling of resources of the community, Rotary Club, the government and Bajaj Auto. Almost each household in the village today benefits from the two water

filtration plants installed on the water supply scheme.

There were many more moments of self-realization in the life of the community. The next moment of empowerment was through closing down of liquor den in the village. Social prohibition on alcohol consumption was ensured following demolition of the



liquor production and sale infrastructure by the villagers themselves.

The turning point in the history of the village came in the form of elections for Gram Panchayat. In the past, the political factions used coercion to turn voting in their favor.

However, in the elections of year 2000, the villagers organized a Gram Sabha and unanimously elected a body to Panchayat. Democracy prevailed in perhaps an archaic Indian form – through *Gram Sabha*. And a young, educated progressive farmer was handed over the charge of Sarpanch (village head). He could rally the youth of the village around the agenda of community development. Within a period of five years, the leadership of

the village collectively improved conditions of governance, education, sanitation and health.

An indicator's assessment, on the basis of survey, revealed that the village surpassed the national indicators of development in these fields.

For example, by the time I left the village towards the end of 2004 for Delhi, it had constructed private toilets for more than 90 percent of 402 households. This included the poor families as well. This was made possible through the strategic philanthropic alliance of Bajaj, Rotary Club, and the villagers.

The last I heard from Gahunje was in September 2005, when the Police Patel (resident police officer) telephoned me to share some good news. The village had repeated a feat by once again unanimously electing representatives to the Gram Panchayat – this time they did it without involving any outsider! The arrival of a new millennium was celebrated by the little community of Gahunje by charting a different course – without much pomp and icons.

The 1970s were the days of 'field anthropology' which helped discover networks of poor people in Latin America that helped them survive as fringe communities. The concept seems to have been rediscovered. Today it is called 'horizontal philanthropy'. The truth is that the little community is capable of helping itself, and what it needs is not patronage but only a helping hand as Gahunje proved it.

(The author was associated with the Jankidevi Bajaj Gram Vikas Sanstha as Project Manager from 1998 to 2004. In mid 2005, elections for the post of Sarpanch and Deputy Sarpanch were held in Gahunje and the villagers elected women candidates to the both the posts.)

Corporate Activities in Political Life

By R C Majumdar

Let us take into consideration the Local Assembly which was originally denoted by Sabha. The village is looked upon as a unit as early as the earliest Vedic age. The Gramani or the leader of the village is mentioned in the Rigveda (X.62.11;107,5) and is often in the later Samhitas the Brahmanas. It is quite clear, that he had voice in the election of kings. According to Zimmer, he presided over the village Assembly, but Macdonell does not accept this view. The Assembly was meeting of both the rich and poor. The rich men went there in full splendour, as Rigveda 8.4.9 informs us.

Village Organisation referred to in the Jatakas

The organisation of the village as a political unit under a headman is also referred to in the Jataka stories. Thus we learn from Kharassara-Jataka that it was the duty of the headman (*gamabhojaka*) to collect revenue, and with the help of the local men, to secure the village against the inroads of robbers. ...Further light is thrown upon the organization of the village by the Kulavaka-Jataka. Here we are distinctly told that men of the village transacted the affairs of the locality. There was a headman who seems to have possessed the power of imposing fines and levying dues on spiritual liquor, ... and as we are expressly told that the villagers transacted the affairs of their own village, it is just possible that the headman was also selected by them.

Village organization referred to in Arthashastra

The organization of the village as a corporate political unit is referred to

by Kautilya who lays down the following rules in Chap. X, Bk. III of his *Arthashastra*.

"When the headman of a village has to travel on account of any business of the whole village, the villagers shall by turns accompany him.

"Those who cannot do this shall pay 1 ½ panas for every yojana. If the headman of a village sends out of the village any person except a thief or an adulterer, he shall be punished with a fine of 24 panas, and the villagers with the first amercement (for doing the same.) (R.Shamasastri's Translations, pp.218-19)

Again: "The fine levied on a cultivator who arriving at a village for work does not work shall be taken by the village itself. ...Any person who does not co-operate in the work of preparation for a public show shall, together with his family forfeit his right to enjoy the show (*preksha*). If a man, who has not co-operated in preparing for a public play or spectacle is found hearing or witnessing it under hiding, or if any one refuses to give his aid in work beneficial to all, he shall be compelled to pay double the value of the aid due from him."

These injunctions give clear hints of a close organisation of the villages, there was a headman who transacted the business of the village and could command the help of the villagers in discharging his onerous task. The headman, together with the villagers, had the right to punish offenders, and could even expel a person from the village. The fact that the headman and the villagers were both punished for an improper use of this right, seems to show that it was exercised in an assembly of villagers presided over by the headman. It may also be concluded

from this, that the rights of individual were not altogether subordinated to those of the corporation, but here the ultimate right of supervision by the king was looked upon as a means of reconciling the two. The village had a common fund which was swelled by such items as the fines levied upon the villagers and the cultivators who neglected their duty. It had also the right to compel each person to do his share of the public work...

The village continued to be regarded as a corporate political unit throughout the post-Vedic period. Thus in the Vishnu and Manu Smritis, the village is reckoned as the smallest political unit in the State fabric and reference is made to the *gramika* or the village headman.

Dharma-sutras and Dharma-sastras

Manu distinctly lay down that the king shall banish from the realm anyone who breaks the agreement of a village community. Dharma-sutras and Dharma-sastras contain frequent references to *gana* and *puga*, both which terms seem to have denoted the town or village corporations... The two following injunctions also prove that the village was looked upon as a corporate body in the age of the Dharma-sutras and Dharma-sastras.

1)The king shall punish that village where Brahmanas, unobservant of their sacred duties and ignorant of the Veda, subsist by begging; for it feeds robbers.

2)When cows or other (animals) have been lost or when (other) property has been taken away forcibly, experienced men shall trace it from the place where it has been taken.



Relation between the Village Assemblies and the Central Government

The corporation possessed absolute authority over the village lands and were generally left undisturbed in the internal management of the villages. They were, however, responsible for the payment of taxes due from the village, and we have an instance on record where the members of a Village Assembly were arrested and imprisoned for the unpaid balance of the royal revenue. The situation was saved by some Brahmana members of the Village Assembly who sold 80 *velis* of land for 200 *kasu* in order to clear up the revenue arrears.

Powers and Functions of the Village Assembly

The Ukkal inscriptions are calculated to give a very fair idea of the general powers and functions of the Village Assembly. These prove beyond all doubt that the village corporations had reached a very high state of perfection. They were looked upon as part and parcel of the constitution of the country and were entrusted with the entire management of the village. They were practically the absolute proprietors of the village lands including fresh clearings, and were responsible for the total amount of revenue to the Government. In case the owner of a plot of land failed to pay his share it became the common property of the corporation which had a right to dispose of it to realise the dues. The corporations also seem to have exercised the exclusive right of administering justice.

Proper Maintenance of the Means of Communication and Irrigation

The proper maintenance of communication and irrigation seems to have demanded the special care of the village corporations. An

inscription at Uttaramallur reports that a certain road in the village had been submerged under water and became unfit to be used even by cattle. Consequently, the village corporation decided that the road should be widened. For this purpose land had to be acquired by purchase from the ryots of the village. The duty of acquiring the land and making the new road was assigned to the 'Garden Supervision Committee.' A number of inscriptions refer to the irrigation works undertaken by the village corporations. Thus two inscriptions from Trichinopoly district record the arrangement made by a Village Assembly for removing silt. 140 baskets of earth had to be taken out of the tank and deposited on the bund every day. The establishment consisted of six labourers, a supervisor, a carpenter, a blacksmith and fishermen, who were paid stipulated quantities of paddy. Several records register fits of money by private individuals, the interest of which was to be spent by the Assembly expressed their gratification at the charitable act of the donor and exempted him from the payment of certain taxes. One endowment provided for the upkeep of a 'second boat' which was to be employed for removing silt. Another inscription records that the Village Assembly of Uttarmallur accepted an endowment and undertook to arrange for the removal of silt every month from the local tank. Besides private donations as *erippatti* the income from which went to meet the cost of repairs of tanks, there was also a regular tax called *eri-ayam* collected for the same purpose. A Chola inscription of the 10th century A.D. states that the villagers agreed to contribute towards the repair of the tank. 'The committee for Supervision of tanks' in the village levied the

contributions and agreed to arrange for the removal of the silt annually. In addition to private donations and the general tax, the Assembly resorted to other expedients to get money for irrigation purposes.

Absolute Authority of the Village Assembly over its lands and people

It has been noted that the inscriptions prove the Village Assembly to have exercised practically an absolute authority over all village concerns. They were the proprietors of village lands, and their power of selling lands and making them tax-free is clearly proved by a number of records. The headman of a village had to take the permission of the Village Assembly for disposing of lands owned by him as Brahmadeya. There is even one instance where the queen had to purchase lands from them. They could also impose taxes and imposts of various descriptions and borrow money for communal purposes. That they did not play a despot and were generally restrained by constitutional usages and other checks is proved by an inscription of Vikrama Chola.

Village Assembly as Public Trustees and Local Banks

A large number of South Indian records hold out the Village Assemblies as serving the functions of public trustees and local banks. We have already noted in the case of Ukkal inscriptions that they kept deposits of money out of the interest of which they fulfilled the conditions laid down by the donor. This interesting function of the Village Assembly is referred to with some additional details in earlier inscriptions from different localities. The Ambasamudram inscription of the Pandya king Varuguna (9th century A.D.) records that he gave into the



hands of the members of the Assembly of Ilangokkudi two hundred and ninety 'kasu', from the interest of which, the capital remaining unspent, offerings had to be provided for to a certain temple. For this (amount) the members of the Assembly had to measure out five hundred and eighty 'kalam' of paddy per year (as) interest, at the rate of two 'kalam' for each 'kasu'. Out of this (income) the servants of the lord and the committee of the Assembly were to jointly pay for offerings four times a day according to a scale which was laid down in great detail.

Far more interesting is the long inscription found at Tiruchchendur in the Tinnevely District, also belonging to the reign of Varaguna. It refers to deposits made by the King with 17 Village Assemblies to supply the annual requirements of a temple in that locality. An inscription of the year A.D 959 found in the neighbourhood of Madras, records a gift of one hundred gold Nishkas, bearing interest at the rate of three Mashas per Nishka per year, to a village Assembly for conducting a special service in a local temple on a particular day every year. A long list is given of the articles to be supplied and of cooks and menials to be employed. Two grants of the Chola king Parantaka I record the deposit of money by his daughter with the Assemblies (*ur*) of two villages for daily supply of oil to a local temple. A fine was to be paid for every day of default. A similar deposit is probably referred to in an inscription of Vishnugupta (8th century A.D.) where a person is said to have purchased "from the householders of the village of Angara" (Shahabad District, Bihar) for the perpetual supply of oil to a temple. An inscription dated 1142 A.D. records that the inhabitants of a

village in Cuttack District (Orissa) headed by the Pradhani (headman) named S'anda received a deposit of gold for feeding the perpetual lamp in a temple. Seventeen instances of the similar function of Village Assemblies are furnished by the Chola inscriptions in Tanjore temple. Out of the money deposited with them they were furnished, as interest, either a sum of money or specified quantities of paddy to the temple. Three inscriptions of Lalgudi in the Tanjore District, belonging to the 9th century A.D. refer to similar deposits of money with three Villages Assemblies. Two of these mention that if the Assemblies fail to supply the ghee as stipulated, the members, collectively or individually, shall pay a fine which in one case, is 216 kanam, and in the other case, double the quantity of default and a fine of 500 kanam of gold.

A Tamil inscription records the gift of a piece of land to the Assembly on condition that they should burn a lamp in a local temple. The supervision of the charity was entrusted to the 'Annual Tank Supervision Committee.' Another inscription records that the Assembly received 75 kalanjus of gold for feeding daily five Brahmans, Of the fourteen inscriptions in Tirukkovalur temples published by Hultzsch, six refer to deposits of money and paddy with the Assembly on condition that they should perform certain specified charitable acts. Sometimes the Assembly received a fixed deposit and, by way of interest, remitted the taxes on certain lands, especially those belonging to a temple.

Proper Maintenance of local Religious and Charitable Institutions by the Village Assembly

In general, however, the village corporations fully recognised their responsibility for maintaining temples

and other local institutions. This is well illustrated by an inscription from Edayarpaddam. A plot of land purchased from the villagers by a Brahmana lady and presented to a temple for the maintenance of a perpetual lamp was found unsuitable for irrigation and no one came forward to cultivate it. The lamp had consequently to be discontinued and the trustees of the temple appear to have requested the villagers to take back into their own management the land which they had once sold to the Brahmana lady, and to supply instead the required number of cows to maintain the lamp. This was done and the land was resumed.

The Assembly, not infrequently, reduced the rents of lands belonging to temples and sometimes even altogether remitted the taxes due from them. A Chola inscription even records that no taxes should be levied on the temple belongings.

Sometimes the Assembly made gifts of lands for the regular supply of garlands and other things to temples. They also made provisions for burning lamps and singing hymns in local temples. There are various cases on record showing that either the Assembly itself granted lands or facilitated purchase of lands by private parties for making offerings to the temple.

A Remarkable Institution

The Village Assembly also made provisions for educational and charitable institutions and in most cases these were associated with local temples. A remarkable instance of this kind of activity is furnished by an inscription of the time of Rajendra Chola. The record states that, in order to secure success to the arms of the king, the Assembly of Rajaraja-chaturvedi-mangalam made the following provisions to the Lord in

Continued on page 12

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the temple of Rajaraja-Vinnagar. The charities were mainly intended for maintaining a hostel and a college for Vedic study.

Social Service

Indeed this was an important feature of the corporate life in ancient India. The passages in *Arthashastra* clearly indicated how men in those days were in the habit of doing work for the common good.

Instances of corporate activity of castes, somewhat like those of guilds, are furnished by inscriptions of South India. A copperplate issued during the reign of Ramaraja of Vijaynagara, and dated (probably wrongly) in Saka 1355, records some social and other privileges granted by five (artisan) communities to a certain person in recognition of his having worsted in a fight the head of a community who was a source of great trouble to them.

Another copperplate, issued during the reign of a Nayak of Madura in Saka 1667, records an agreement among

themselves, some imposts on every household on occasions of marriage and funerals, for the maintenance of a *matha* built by them. A stone inscription from Karur, dated in the 43rd year of Kulottunga Chola I, records an agreement by the shepherds of the place to present a sheep to a particular temple on the occasion of the nuptials of their boys and when their girls were sent to set up a family and on the occasion of *talai-mani* of their children. An inscription on a pillar in a temple at Nandavaram in Kurnul District, dated Saka 1492, records the resolution of the Vidvanmahajanas of Nandavaram on the occasion when their *agrahara* village was restored to them and they were reinstated in it by the authorities, that they would take to the study of the Vedas and the *sastras* and would abstain from levying dowries for marriage of girls in their community.

* Excerpts from '*Corporate Activities in Political Life*' by R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, 3rd edition, (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya: Calcutta, 1969)

Daan: A Tradition of Giving

By Sanjay Agrawal

Daan is a very old institution in India, and one that is widely practiced even today. Ancient Indian religious¹ and secular literature deals with the issue frequently and in great detail. However, each *purana* or writer deals with specific practices and rituals associated with *daan*, and thus fails to provide a systematic overview of how *daan* works, what is its larger purpose, and how it interfaces with other sub-systems of the Hindu society. This article attempts to provide a glimpse of some of the practices and thinking associated with *daan*.

Daan vs. Donation

In this article, we use the word *daan* throughout to denote Indian traditional practices. Is there a difference between *daan* and donation? On the surface, no. Donation is merely the English word for *daan*². However, according to scholars, the cultural interpretation of the two words is very different.

When a donation is made, the donor remains interested in how it is utilised. However, this is not so with *daan*. When a *daan* is made, the donor cuts off all emotional or legal ties with it³. It then becomes the donee's property. It is for the donee to decide how it will be used.

It is due to this reason that some scholars⁴ translate *daan* into English as gift, rather than as donation.

Daan look-alikes

People often confuse *daan* with *dakshina* (दक्षिणा). However, the two are completely different. *Dakshina*⁵ is a type of honorarium for services. The amount is not agreed in advance and can not be negotiated. *Dakshina* does not qualify as *daan*. There is no *punya* associated with *dakshina*. However, *dakshina* is also required as covering

fees⁶ for the *daan*, and is always added on as a sweetener after any act of *daan* to a Brahmin.

Sixteen types of payments⁷ do not qualify as *daan*. Some of these are:

- To an immoral or fallen brahmin
- To a thief
- To a liar
- To an ingrate
- To a person who sells the *veds*
- Of money earned through injustice



- To the village / town priest
- To one's father and other such *gurujan*
- To people who catch snakes for a living
- To one's servants
- To one's women folk
- To a person who abandons his *vaanprasth ashram*⁸ or *sanyas ashram* and becomes a householder again

What is the logical basis for including people such as priests, parents or dependents in this list? Well, clearly the payment should be made anyway as a duty or for services rendered, and, therefore, does not qualify for extra merit attached to *daan*.

Sankalp – promise to give

The act of *daan* formally starts with a *sankalp*. A *sankalp* is like a promise to give. This *sankalp* is recited by the donor in favor of the donee, who is mostly a Brahmin. The property to be donated is either at hand physically or is specified as part of the *sankalp*.

What happens if you make a *sankalp* and then back out of it? Such a person can end up in a special type of hell, which is reserved for people who lie or cheat in matters related to *daan*⁹. This hell is popularly known as *vaitarani* (वैतरणी), though it has several other technical names¹⁰ as well. In order to escape this hell, you should have donated at least a cow¹¹, who will help you cross this hell.

Benefits of Daan

What does the donor get out of making a *daan*? *Agni Puran* provides¹² a rendering of the general *sankalp*¹³ for *daan*. This *sankalp* gives us an idea of what the donor expects out of a *daan*:

अद्यामुकगोत्राय विप्रायामुकशर्मणे ॥६॥
एतद्द्रव्यं विष्णुदेवं सर्वपापोपशान्तये ।
आयुरारोग्यवृद्धयर्थं सौभाग्यादिवृद्धये ॥७॥
गोत्रसंततिवृद्धयर्थं विजयायै धनायै च ।
धर्मायैश्वर्यकामाय तत्पापशमनाय च ॥८॥
संसारमुक्तये दानं तुभ्यं संप्रददेह्यहम् ।
एतद्दानप्रतिष्ठार्थं तुभ्यमेतद्दाम्यहम् ॥९॥
एतेन प्रीयतां नित्यं सर्वलोकपतिः प्रभुः ।
यज्ञदानव्रतपते विद्याकीर्त्यादि देहि मे ॥१०॥
धर्मकामार्थमोक्षाश्च देहि मे
मानसेप्सितम् ।

The donor seeks the following benefits from *Shree Vishnu*¹⁴ through the above *sankalp*:

1. Pleasure of *Shree Vishnu*
2. Urge to sin may die down
3. Increase in life, health, luck, *gotra*¹⁵ (गोत्र), and children
4. Getting victory, *dharm*¹⁶, *aishwarya*¹⁷(ऐश्वर्य), and desires
5. Extinguishment of sins

6. Release from the material world, and,

7. Getting knowledge and prestige. Such a *daan* is also known as *naimittik* (नैमित्तिक), that is, one made with a purpose¹⁸. According to *Agni Puran*, the benefits from such a *daan* vary according to the recipient. Giving *daan* to a sinner is fruitless. For others, the following table shows the progression of benefits:

Receiver	Amount of Benefit
Varn-sankar ¹⁹	Two times
Shudra	Four Times
Vaishya or Kshatriya	Eight Times
Nominal Brahmin ²⁰	Sixteen Times
Brahmin who studies the Ved	100 times
Purohit or yaajak Brahmin ²¹	Inexhaustible
Acharya who can explain the meaning of Ved	Infinite
Poor Brahmin	Infinite
Yagnakarta Brahmin	Infinite

While *daan* to non-brahmins is not prohibited, it does not seem to be as good an investment as one made to a learned Brahmin, who knows the *Ved*.

In keeping with this general trend²², *Agni Puran* is very critical of the Brahmin who is devoid of *tap*²³ and study of *ved*, but is always interested in getting *daan*. Such a *Brahmin* sinks with the *daan* like a person on a boat made of stone²⁴! Various *smritis* also emphasise this point again and again²⁵. *Atrismriti* goes even further: if such *Brahmins* are getting alms from a particular village, then the king should punish the villagers, as if they were feeding thieves²⁶!

Naimittik daan, as described in *Agni Puran*, is classified as *rajasik* in *Shreemadbhagwad Geeta*²⁷. What does this mean?

Classification of Daan

According to *Shreemadbhagwad Geeta*, all *daan* can be classified into

three categories:

1. *Sattvik*²⁸ (सात्त्विक)
2. *Rajasik*²⁹ (राजसिक)
3. *Tamasik*³⁰ (तामसिक)

*Sattvik daan*³¹ is one that is made as a duty. It should be made after considering the time, place and the suitability of the receiver. The receiver should not perform any service or provide any benefit in return³². Swami Ramsukhdas explains³³ that this kind of *daan* is re-

ally *tyag*, relinquishment, in which nothing is desired in return. This type of *daan* is not the kind that gives *punya* (पुण्य), merit in return³⁴. Seeking such *punya* will transform the *daan* into *rajasik*.

*Rajasik daan*³⁵ is made for getting some direct or indirect benefit (whether material or spiritual) in re-

turn. The parting (of property) causes pain or regret to the donor. Or the *daan* is given after some persuasion (as in a collection or *chanda* (चन्दा). *Rajasik daan* gives whatever benefits are sought by the donor.

When *daan* is made to an unsuitable person or without considering time or place, then it is called *tamasik daan*³⁶. If the *daan* is made without showing proper respect or in an insulting manner, then also it becomes *tamasik*.

It appears, therefore, that *Shreemadbhagwad Geeta* encourages *Sattvik daan*. However, this conclusion would probably vary from one person to another, depending on which *gun*³⁷ (गुण) is dominating the person at that time (*sattvik*, *rajasik*, *tamasik*).

How much?

How much should one give? According to *Skand Puran*³⁸, one should use 10% of one's justly earned income

on good deeds or works of public benefit. According to *Shreemadbhagwad Puran*³⁹, one should divide one's funds⁴⁰ into five equal⁴¹ parts:

धर्माय यशसेऽर्थाय कामाय स्वजनाय च ।
पञ्चधा विभजन्वित्तमिहामुत्र च मोदते ॥३७॥

One part should be used for *dharm* (*daan* etc.), second for *yash* (public works, which bring fame to oneself), third should be reinvested into business, fourth for *kaam* (enjoyment of material things), and fifth for one's family and friends.

If one follows the above prescription, then you would end up spending about 40% of your funds on others: 20% as *daan* and another 20% on works for public-benefit, such as step-wells, temples, water-tanks, gardens, etc.

To be Continued

Footnotes:

1 The *daan dharm parv* of *Mahabharat* (*Anushasan Parv*) is particularly detailed in this regard.

2 Donation comes from the Latin word *dMnum*, which sounds very similar to the *Sanskrit* word *dnum* (दानम्). Etymologically, both donation and *daan* have a common Indo-European root dM-. [The American Heritage dictionary of Indo-European Roots, p. 21]

3 दत्तं मन्येत यद् दत्त्वा तद् दानं श्रेष्ठमुच्यते ।
Mahabharat, *Anushasanparv* (13.1.59.4; page 5656)

4 See for example, Marcel Mauss (*Essai sur le don, forme archaïque de l'échange* [1925], later translated into English in 1954 as 'The Gift').

5 The word *dakshina* is derived from the fact that the person receiving it should always be kept to your right (दक्षिण, *dakshin*, South). The same concept is used when people perambulate around a deity or sacred object, always keeping it to their right. The Hindi word for perambulation is, therefore, *pradakshina* (प्रदक्षिणा)!

6 There are two transactions: one is *daan* proper, and the other is *dakshina*.

7 As explained by Muneeshwar Markandeya to Yudhisthir. *Mahabharat*, *Vanparv*, *Marka-ndeyas-amasyaparv*

(3.12.200-6-8) P. 1524

8 Renouncing city life for forest dwelling

9 Also in exchange of money or in giving witness

10 *Aveechimaan* (अवीचिमान), *pooyod* (पूयोद), *praanrodh* (प्राणरोध), *vishasan* (विशसन), *lalabhaksh* (लालाभक्ष), *saarmeyadan* (सारमेयादन), *ayahpaan* (अयःपान) (Hindu Dharmkosh: p.59)

11 This widely-held belief has resulted in a unique innovation: in religious towns such as Haridwar, where many Hindus go to spend their last days, the same cow is donated and sold again and again, often for as little as a hundred rupees!

12 *Agni Puran*, Chapter 208, verses 6½-11½, p.553-554

13 Pledge

14 This may vary from one *purana* to another, depending on the deity to which the particular *purana* is devoted.

15 A sub-division of caste; somewhat similar to clan.

16 Appropriate conduct

17 Affluence, wealth, greatness

18 *Daan* made out of a sense of duty, without expecting anything in return is known as *nitya* (नित्य, eternal).

19 Born from a mixed marriage, i.e. marriage between two different *varns* (social categories).

20 Called *Brahman-bruv* (ब्राह्मणब्रुव): one who has received the proper *samskars* (संस्कार), but does not engage in study or teaching.

21 One who performs *yagna*

22 See for example, *Manusmriti*, Ch. 11, verses 1-4, 6: सांतानिकं यक्ष्यमा।मध्वगं सर्ववेदसम्। गुर्वर्थं पितृमात्रार्थं स्वाध्यायाध्युपतापिनः ॥ १ ॥ नवैतान्नातकान्विद्याद्ब्राह्मणान्धर्मभिक्षुकान्। निःस्वेभ्यो देयमेतेभ्यो दानं विद्याविशेषतः ॥ २ ॥ एतेभ्यो हि द्विजाग्र्येभ्यो देयमन्नं सदक्षिणम्। इतरेभ्यो

बहिर्वेदि कृतान्नं देयमुच्यते ॥३॥ सर्वरत्नानि राजा तु यथाहो प्रतिपादयेत्। ब्राह्मणान्वेदविदुषो यज्ञार्थं चैव दक्षिणाम् ॥४॥ धनानि तु यथाशक्ति विप्रेषु प्रतिपादयेत्। वेदवित्सु विविक्तेषु प्रेत्य स्वर्गं समश्नुते ॥६॥; *Yagnvalkyasmriti*, Ch. 1, verse 200-201.

23 तप, effort

24 *Agni Puran*, Chapter 209, verse 36, p.557

25 For instance, see *Manusmriti*, Ch. 3, verse 97-98, Ch. 4, verse 188, 193-194; *Haareetsmriti*, Ch. 1, verse 23-24; *Brihaspatismriti*, verse 58-60; *Vyassmriti*, Ch. 4, verse 50-52, 62 (*Dharm Shastra Sangrah*, pp. 261-262)

26 अन्नताश्चानधीयाना यत्र भैक्ष्यचरा द्विजाः। तं ग्रामं दण्डयेद्राजा चौरभक्तदण्डवत् ॥ *Atrismriti*, verse 22. Also see *Parasharsmriti* (Chapter 1, verse 66) and *Vasishthsmriti* (Chapter 3, verse 5) for similar directives. (*Dharm Shastra Sangrah*, p.261)

27 Chapter 17, verses 20-22

28 *Sattvik* is associated with purity and spirituality.

29 *Rajasik* is associated with materialism. It is focused on worldly affairs.

30 *Tamasik* is associated with lack of intellect. It leads to darkness.

31 दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे। देशेकाले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ॥20. *Shreemadbhagwad Geeta*, Chapter 17, verse 20.

32 अनुपकारी

33 *Geeta Prabodhini*, (1546) p. 480

34 एक गुना दान। सहस्रत्र गुना पुण्य

35 यत्तु प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः। दीयते च परिकल्प्यं तद्दानं राजसं स्मृतम् ॥21. *Shreemadbhagwad Geeta*, Chapter 17, verse 21.

36 अदेशकाले यद्दानमपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते। असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ॥22. *Shreemadbhagwad Geeta*, Chap 17, verse 22.

37 Attribute

38 न्यायोपार्जितवित्तेन दशमांशेन धीमता। कर्तव्यो विनियोगश्च ईशप्रीत्यर्थहितवे ॥ *Kya Karein*, *Kya Naa Karein*, p. 105, para 1.

39 *Shreemadbhagwat Puran*, 8.19.37, vol. 1, p.841

40 *Vitta* could mean income or it could mean wealth. Here, the sense of income appears to be more appropriate.

41 Equal parts have not been clearly specified. However, the structure of the verse appears to indicate that the parts should be equal.

This interpretation is also supported by the fourth story (p.35) in *Vetalpanchvinshati*, in which a warrior named Veervar (in the service of the King Shudrak of Shobhavati city) used to spend his salary of 500 gold coins per day as follows:

- 100 for household expenditure;
- 100 for clothes, perfumes, betel etc.;
- 100 on worship of Shiv and Vishnu;
- 200 as *daan* to brahmins and the poor.

Vetalpanchvinshati (commonly called as *Betal Pacheessi*) is a compilation of 25 stories and is commonly believed to be around 1500-2000 years old.

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Sanjay Agrawal heads Account Aid - A Delhi-based agency that assists NGOs with accounting.

Building Community in Rural Areas

Dingle, Ireland: The town of dingle is situated on the scenic Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry in southwest Ireland. The area is one of the most popular tourist attractions of Ireland. Its beauty and ruggedness are contrasted by its remoteness; many older men live alone across the peninsula, often in very basic living conditions, the remoteness and loneliness create mental health problems and the incidence of suicide is above the national average for their peer group. A local initiative began,

Dochas Dingle (which translated from the Irish language means 'Hope for dingle'), to alleviate these problems. One initiative was the setting up of a chess club in one of the local pubs, which creates a social outlet for some of the men each week. Another, supported by the Community Foundation for Ireland, involves the provision of laptop computers and training in Word, email, etc, which has meant that some of the men can now keep in contact with family and friends elsewhere in Ireland and abroad. (Source: 2005 *Community Foundation Global Status Report*)



Philanthropic Zeal of the Mewati Community

By Mona Mehta

*"Kadee na daan karo haath su,
Na bhaya ko khavaya,
Vaaki ki janmo ho Mavdi,
Kiya duniya mein aave"*

"Nor did you ever give any thing in charity,
Neither did you feed your brethren,
Why were you born O Mewati,
Why did you come to this world?"

Nagina (Mewat District, Haryana): Backward they may be but stingy they are not. One look at frail looking Hussain Khan, 75, dressed in soiled kurta pyjama, might evoke your charitable instincts. But the giving habits of this elder and those of the Mewati Muslim community that he belongs to, can put the philanthropist in us to shame.

Not only does this Mayo give alms in the form of Zakaat and Phitra as prescribed in Quran and Muslim scriptures, he and his community give generously marking occasions like births, weddings and even deaths. According to the latest Minorities Commission Report, Mewat, the newly formed district of Haryana, is considered the most backward of all the regions of Haryana. But the unique 'giving habits' of Mayos, as the Muslim dominated population of Mewat is commonly referred to, makes them one of the most generous communities around.

"We believe that any one who comes asking for alms or food at our doorstep should not be turned away empty handed," says Hussain Khan, the local "Numberdar", taking one puff of his hukka. And his cronies

sitting around on woven charpoys, nod in unison. Although they do not believe in the Hindu Code Bill nor do they prescribe to the Muslim Personal Law when it comes to inheritance of property by the daughters or widows, Mayos can be extremely generous when it comes to forms of "giving". Describing the various ways of giving by his community, the Numberdar says, besides the "Dahej" or dowry given to the daughters and sisters at the time of their wedding, there is a tradition of "Nimantran Bhat". Whenever the

women in their community come home with a wedding invitation, it is mandatory for the family to offer them clothes and money in the form of daan called "Nimantran Bhat". Interestingly there is also a custom of giving called "Neyota" where people donate money for wedding in the neighbourhood, and in all likelihood will get back double the amount by the neighbours, when it is their turn to hold any such function.

During the time of weddings in the household, every "shavaasani" or married girls of the household, be it cousins, sisters or aunts are given gifts according to the family's status. "If we go to marry our sons to brides from another village, we make donations to the schools, temples, madrassas or gurukul of that village," adds the Numberdar, who is the local wiseman of sorts.

"Even during the time of 'milni' where the relatives from the bridegroom's side meet the relatives of the bride side for the first time during the wedding, we have a

tradition of giving donations for the local temple and mosque," he informs.

"Chhathi Choochak" is a form of philanthropy practiced by the Mayos around child birth, where clothes, money, silver coins and food grains are donated to the newborn's parents by the elders in the family. The

maternal grandparents of the new born can donate a 'quintal' explains the Numberdar, i.e. goods worth Rs 8000, or 'maand' i.e. Rs 3,200. On such occasions, 'daan' in the form of

clothes and money is also given to the local potter, local bards, sweepers, water carriers or 'bhishti', barber and cooks in the village, and also to each household in the village belonging to their daughter's in-laws village. The 'Dai Ma' or midwife has a special role to play during childbirth in such village communities. As a mark of respect, she too is given clothes and money.

These are few ways of giving are practiced by entire Mewati community, be it Hindus or Muslims, who comprise of 70 percent of the population.

Festivals like Id also call for generous 'giving'. As per the Holy Quran, Muslims community here offer Zakaat. This form of giving is to be made secretly. It amounts to 2.5 percent of personal wealth. As for the recipients, the first priority is given to the poor within the family, then poor people outside, or educational institutions like the Madrassa around. As per the Muslim scriptures, it is a sin to enjoy personal



wealth if one does not donate money worth 2.5 percent of every 51 grams of silver or around 80 grams of gold that one possesses, says Ramzan Khan, another villager. "We are entitled to make use of such valuables only if we pay the required zakaat," he adds. "That is why many of us do not keep such valuables, since you will be required to pay more according to the scriptures," adds Hussain Khan. Phitra is another form of giving that is made during the festival of Id, especially Id-ul-Fitr, by Muslims all over the world. And this is true of the Mewati Muslims too.

"Every household in our community is also required to donate in the name of each member of their family, a minimum of 2.25 kgs of food grain or 4.5 kgs of millet, almonds or raisins to the poor, widows, invalid or those who have no source of income as per the Holy Quran," says Hussain.

Shabea Raat, nineteen days before Ramzan, is also a big occasion for giving among the Muslim community. Food is cooked and donated to the local Madrassas, or the local Imam once a year on this day. "They say, the donations made during the month of Ramzan prove to be seventy percent more beneficial," informs Hussain, explaining why many people prefer to donate during this period. During Moharram, on the first day of the Muslim calendar, the community here gets together to donate money to set up roadside stalls to give out "sharbaat" to the passersby during the "Tajia" procession.

On many occasions, the villagers invite religious leaders from the famous mosques to give talks. "During such times, all the villagers take care of the guests from the neighbouring villages who come to attend the talks by offering them food and shelter," says Hussain.

Besides the festivals, harvest time is also an occasion for giving in this community. "During the harvest, we donate some share of the crop to the landless, local potter, local bards, sweepers, water carriers or 'bhishti', barber in the village," informs Ramzan Khan, who owns 18 acres of land in the neighbourhood. There a form of giving called "Usra" where a farmer who is not under any sort of debt, is expected to donate 100 "maand" worth crop to the poor or local temple or mosque, once a year.

The Mewati tradition of giving also extends to the seasons. "Bhado or the month of August is also time to set aside donations for the "Marasis" or the local bards. "We give 5 - 20 kgs of food grain to the local entertainers, each year," says Hussain.

The Muslim community here has its own annalists or "jaaga" who chronicle the main events in their households like births, deaths, weddings from generation to generation. Interestingly, most of these "jaagas" are Hindus, much like the traditional "pandas" in Haridwar who have been maintaining the annals for many Hindu families over many generations. "Jaagas visit us once a year to record the latest developments in our families," informs Khawaj Ali, sarpanch of Karhada village in Nagina. "You know every time, these jaagas visit us, we give them "sukha daan" i.e. dry food which they cook themselves in keeping with their religious compulsions," he adds.

The community here makes generous donations in the form of food grains

to poor migrants who come around every winter, say from Kashmir, in search for food and livelihood. Even beggars, fakirs, sadhus and mahatmas who arrive at our doorstep never go empty handed," says Ali with great pride.

There are many instances where the Mayos get together and make philanthropic gestures towards the Hindu villagers also. "One such incident took place a decade ago where the sarpanch's father Choudhary Achpal Khan conducted a "dharm shaadi" where marriage of seven local Hindu girls and that of his own daughter was arranged at the same time and he donated the same amount to each of these girls as much he spent on his daughter on the occasion.

They often organize camps for "Kawariyas", the Shiv followers who carry home water from the Ganga before the festival of Shivaratri. The villagers offer them food and shelter as they make their way home.

The community also gets together to make generous donations for victims of natural calamity, inform the villagers. "We strongly believe that we are all

accountable to God. It is important to make donations so save your self from life in Hell," says a villager explaining the reason behind their strong tradition of philanthropy.

"It is written in our scriptures, that we must donate to the poor and needy in our lifetime," adds the Numberdar, preparing to leave for the namaz. "But, most of all, it gives us a lot of happiness when we donate," he adds summing up the philanthropic zeal of the Mayo people.

(Inputs from Sonal Chaturvedi)



Influence of Buddhist values on tribal life in North East India

By Verrier Elwin



“Among the virtues praised in the Buddhist stories perhaps the most honoured is generosity, the practical

expression of non-attachment. In this collection we have the Singpho tale of the Good Old Man who almost ruins himself and the happiness of his home by giving away the chicken that he is supposed to sell. But the most important is the tale of the Dime Kundan in which the hero gives away everything he has, including his children, his wife and his own eyes after being driven into exile on account of his liberality... Finally, among the Sherdupken tales recorded by Mr Rinchin Norbu, there is a story of a woman with a pious son who gives alms to Lamas and the poor and feeds the pilgrims who pass by their house. One day, while the mother is away a very old woman comes to beg and the boy gives her all the food they have. The old woman blesses him and says that the Lord Buddha will reward him and that if he will go to a neighboring hill, he will find something of great value. When the boy's mother returns home, she was very angry that all the food has been given away. The story goes on to say that the boy goes to the hill where he finds a tattered bag and a pair of old shoes and when he comes home, these divine gifts make him so rich that he is able to spend all his time giving food and money to pilgrims and to the poor...” (Source: *Philanthropologist, Select Writings*, by Verrier Elwin, 2001)

ITC Holds out Mall Hope for Villagers

By Sambit Saha

KOLKATA: Swanky malls and hypermarts have changed the way urban India shops today. However, millions of rural people still depend on kirana shops.

But not any more. If ITC is ready to walk the talk, miniature malls will dot the rural landscape of our country. The Calcutta-based conglomerate has already introduced the model in a little-known place in Madhya Pradesh. It now wants to ramp up the number to 30 in the next 12-18 months.

Spread out over 7,000 square feet, Choupal Sagar — as the hypermarket is called — has created ripples with new shopping experience for rural consumers. The model is unique as the place will double up as a shopping centre and a farmer facilitation unit providing facilities like training, soil testing, health clinics, cafeteria, bank, investment counters and fuel stations. The company will spend

about Rs 5 crore on each of these establishments. The rural malls are linked to its e-choupal network. So far, it has set up 5,200 e-choupals for over 3 million villagers living in 31,000 villages.

The e-choupal network has been set up in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharastra, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

The first hypermart in Madhya Pradesh is connected to an e-choupal. A farmer, who comes to sell his agricultural produce through the e-choupal also has the option to buy almost anything he wants. The rural mall sells everything from fertilisers and hair oil to mixer-grinders and tractors. To make sure that farmers keep coming to the mall even when they do not have to sell any produce, support services are in place like health clinics, cafeteria, bank, and investment counters.

(Source: *The Telegraph*, July 3, 2005)

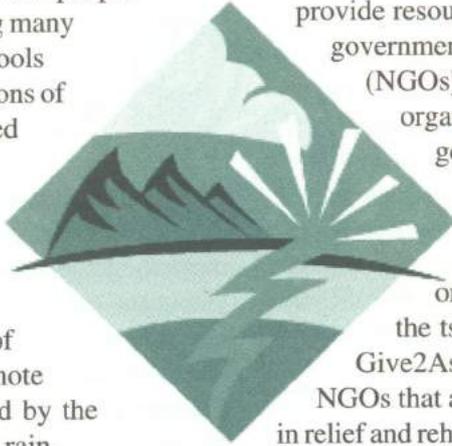
Computers for Adult Literacy

Toward the end of his tenure at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Fakir Chand Kohli, widely regarded as the father of India's software industry, began to wonder whether his company's vaunted expertise in software development could be applied to one of the most pressing problems in Indian society — the high rate of illiteracy. Under the aegis of TCS, a volunteer team of experts from divisions across the company came up with a low-cost, technology-based approach that promises to substantially increase the country's literacy rate. The Computer-Based Functional Literacy method, which focuses on reading, rather than writing, is designed to provide a basic 300-500 word vocabulary to adults over the course of 40 hours — about a third of the time of traditional training. CBFL uses a combination of animated graphics and repetition of sound patterns to engage the learner. The computer-based curriculum provides flexibility to adjust to the varied schedules of working adults with families, and does not require trained teachers. “You don't need a state of the art computer for this program to really fly,” says Tata Group Chairman Ratan N. Tata, which means that the training can be conducted on donated 486 Pentium computers also. (Source: <http://www.synergos.org/globalgivingmatters/features>)



Give2Asia Launches Pakistan Earthquake Fund

The recent devastating earthquake in Pakistan has caused widespread loss of life and damage across the country. Thousands of people have died, including many children whose schools collapsed, and millions of survivors are in need of shelter, food and water, medical supplies, and basic sanitation. The existing challenge of providing aid to remote areas is exacerbated by the approach of winter rain. In response to this crisis, Give2Asia has created the Pakistan Earthquake Fund to help with rebuilding and relief efforts in the most affected regions through programs identified by our on-the-ground staff. The initial focus will be on emergency relief and then will address the long-term



reconstruction and rehabilitation of communities.

Like the Tsunami Recovery Fund, the Pakistan Earthquake Fund will provide resources to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, and government agencies.

According to reports from local staff and partners, and based on lessons learned from the tsunami response,

Give2Asia is poised to support NGOs that are providing training in relief and rehabilitation, livelihood rebuilding programs including micro-credit, psychological counselling training for relief workers, logistical management and coordination to prevent bottlenecks in relief materials, and the reconstruction of essential buildings such as schools and clinics.

(Source: www.give2asia.org)

A Fast Reaction to Local Disaster

Cumbria Community Foundation has won one of the most prestigious accolades in the charity sector at the Charity Awards 2005.

The charity was recognised for its speedy launch of the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund set up in response to the storms and floods of January 2005.

While the rest of the world was focusing its efforts on the tsunami, the staff at Cumbria Community Foundation sped into action.

The awards are the UK charity sector's most prestigious annual award scheme and recognise excellence in the management of charities.

(Source: www.communityfoundation.org.uk)

£1m Converted to £ 19m in Community Foundation

Challenge

Community foundations have turned an initial investment of one million into 19 million pounds of

funds through Time for Growth, a challenge established through a grant from Esmee Fairbarin Foundation to Community Foundation Network. In a recently published evaluation, its author Christine Forrester found that the successful completion of the challenge represents a significant

achievement. It will have a long term impact in building endowment funds for the participating foundations and increasing their grant –giving to the communities they serve.

In 2000, ten community foundations each received a grant of 10,000 pounds towards strengthening their staffing with the aim of achieving a combined total of 20million pounds in new endowment investment over a three-year period. By the end of the challenge, all but three had achieved their 2 million target and the total raised in new endowment was nearly 19 million pounds. Time for Growth was planned as a period during which the pressures of seeking core costs to support investment for fund development would be lifted from these foundations, enabling them to

concentrate on building their endowments and securing long-term sustainability. Their progress towards this target provides valuable learning about how different foundations employed a range of techniques to reach their individual 2 million pounds targets. The evaluation found that five key changes contributed to success:

- * shift in the vision, confidence and self-belief in the foundations, and in the engagement of their Boards
- * the employment of specialist fund development staff and applying resources to staffing
- * developing personal links with donors
- * a positive shift in the position of the foundation with its community.

(www.communityfoundation.org.uk)



Gandhi ji's Lessons for Chaplin

By Amit Gangar

A meeting of Charlie Chaplin with Mahatma Gandhi in a humble little house in the slum district off the East India Dock Road, London, was brief by



significant. At the end of this meeting Gandhi explained to Chaplin the true meaning of supreme independence. It was to shed oneself of unnecessary things. This was in the context of Gandhi ji's astute political-economic-spiritual theory that Chaplin presumed was against the use of machinery.

(Excerpt from 'The Speaking Tree', *The Times of India*, September 30, 2005)

Non-Political News, Local Ads to Boost Community Radio



In a fresh attempt to promote community radio, which failed to take off as earlier envisaged, the government now plans

to commercialise it and allow broadcast of non-political news to make the system more functionally viable and community-friendly. In the new policy guidelines for community radio, which will be forwarded to the Cabinet for approval soon, the I&B Ministry has proposed local advertisements to make it commercially viable, sources said. They pointed out that the new policy allows community radio operators to broadcast non-political news, news on local sports and other local events of the community. According to I&B Secretary S K Arora "it's important to have a policy that will not only promote setting up of community radio but also ensure they are contentwise and financially viable". Although the government had allowed setting up of community radios following a policy announced in December 2002, stringent norms and guidelines dampened enthusiasm. Only recognised educational institutions were allowed due to which till date, the country has just about a dozen such radio stations operating. The idea, an I&B official said, will be "to allow a facility that will aim at contributing to the lives of the local community by creation of content by the people and for the people of that community".

(Source: *The Indian Express*, September 15, 2005)

Sampradaan Indian Centre for Philanthropy is pleased to announce that we have brought out the third edition of "Directory of Donor Organisations". It costs Rs. 300/- only. A postage of Rs. 50/- for destinations outside New Delhi is to be added to the price of the directory. Purchasers from New Delhi must add Rs. 10/- for postage. We have reduced the price of the directory to suit the paying ability of our valued partners in the voluntary sector. There is a new feature to help the reader in the form of subject wise index of organisations. It consists of four types of data:

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Mumbai Residents Help Others During Floods

By Ramola Talwar Badam

Mumbai: Akhilesh Bhargava spent his 30th birthday clinging to a tree as roiling waters below him tore through a Bombay street, sweeping along the bodies of children, logs and the debris of a city battered by rain.

Now, three days after India's highest ever recorded one-day rainfall, he counts himself among the lucky - another survivor rescued by the thousands of Bombay residents who risked their lives to help those in need. The deluge killed nearly 700 people in western India. Roads turned into rivers, telephones went silent, trains stopped running and aircraft couldn't take off after suburban neighborhoods in India's financial capital were hit Tuesday by 37 inches of rain.

"It was horrifying. I saw children float past me and logs of wood and branches," Bhargava said Thursday, his body still covered with purple bruises and nursing torn ligaments in his leg after the night-long ordeal. "You didn't know what was going to hit you."

His nightmare began Tuesday evening when he headed home with a cousin after four hours of unremitting rain flooded the basement office where he runs his packaging business, off a busy road leading to Bombay's international airport. Outside, he grabbed onto a rope that residents had tied across the road to help people wade through the neck-deep water.

"One minute we were hanging on to the rope and the next my cousin slipped and his head went under water," Bhargava said, shuddering. "I

tried to pull him out with one hand but my legs gave way."

"I kept shouting for help, but people couldn't hear me above the roar of the water."



As he fought to stay above water, hands grabbed him and pulled him onto a tree by the side of the road.

He spent the night with the strangers who had saved his life.

They all watched helplessly as bodies washed past them. "We wanted to help them, but if I had let go, I would have been finished."

His cousin too managed to stay afloat, and was pulled to safety by people further along the road.

This hectic cosmopolitan city may be famed across Asia for its movie industry dominated by hip-swaying musicals, its wealthy stockbrokers and its powerful business clans, but this week it proved something else: It looks after its own.

The people who rescued Bhargava and his cousin were among the still-nameless Bombay residents who offered help despite the dangers, or who opened their homes to strangers, or fed tea and biscuits to people wading past in waist-deep water.

Even five-star hotels joined in, offering cavernous rooms to bedraggled commuters and residents of surrounding shanties.

"One hotel opened up its convention hall and gave medicines, food, water and warm blankets to kids from the nearby slum. There were at least 500 poor people in that huge room," said Ravi Prasad, a garment exporter who had gone into the hotel to buy food.

At least 273 people died in Bombay, India's financial capital and the capital of Maharashtra - most deaths

occurred due to drowning, landslides or electrocution.

On Thursday, Bhargava shook his head as he stood on the same street, still flooded in parts but now packed with cars honking to inch ahead.

"You can't imagine the force of water was so great here on a main Bombay road." While Bhargava fought to hold onto the tree, in a neighboring suburb his wife and two young children, ages 2 and 5, narrowly escaped being drowned.

The car they were traveling in, with cake and snacks to surprise Bhargava in his office, filled with flood water in a matter of minutes.

"I could barely see my son, the water inside the car was that high," said Pooja, returning from a Hindu temple

Thursday after giving thanks for her family's safety. "When we opened the car door and got out, the car just sank." Employees in a nearby office block rushed out to help the family to safety. She later walked more than five hours to get home, carrying her children with the help of a family friend. It was only Wednesday

morning that she managed to reach her husband. "I had no idea where Akhilesh was till we got through to a friend whose place he managed to get to," she said. The family has postponed all birthday celebrations.

"We're still recovering. To have survived is celebration enough," said Bhargava.

His wife said she gave thanks at the temple to the five people who saved her husband's life. She wishes she could thank them personally, but doesn't even know their names.

(Source: <http://news.findlaw.com/ap/i/626/07-29-2005/64af002cf8fc3bf5.html>)

Law Planned to Monitor Your Charity

Law Commission proposes authority to monitor collection and accounts

By Ananthakrishnan G.

NEW DELHI: Collection of relief funds in times of



calamity has always invited charges of misuse, some credible. To check their recurrence, the Law Commission of India has proposed to the Centre a new law for regulating and monitoring the

collection and utilisation of funds by NGOs and private groups in the name of calamity relief or rehabilitation of war-affected soldiers. The recommendations are contained in the Commission's 191st report, which was submitted to the Union Law Ministry last December. Official sources told *The Indian Express* that the report has been forwarded to the Home Ministry for suitable action. Retired Supreme Court Judge M Jagannadha Rao heads the Commission. The main feature of the new law would be a Contributory Regulatory Authority (CRA) to oversee the collection and distribution of contributions and donations for calamity relief and to ensure that those collecting it maintain proper accounts. It would also make it mandatory for any agency or persons who desire to collect contributions for calamity relief to register themselves with the CRA, whose accounts would in turn be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Commission has also proposed elaborate powers to the District Collector in matters of registration of the agencies and inquiry into complaints of misappropriation of funds by them. The proposed enactment, it said, should be made applicable to all those contributions or donations collected or received either in cash or kind by any person, association, agency, body, institution, firm, NGO, trust or other organization. The contributions received by these private bodies from the Government or any fund set up by the Government should also be brought within its purview, said the report, referring to instances of misuse of donations collected in the name of Kargil martyrs and Gujarat quake victims. The Commission, however, did not believe it necessary to bring funds collected by the Government within the purview of the proposed law, saying there were enough provisions to monitor them. Any further scope for abuse has already been taken care of by the high-powered committee on disaster management set up by the Centre, it said. But even the high-powered committee had not addressed the issue of collection and distribution of funds and other items in the form of donations or contributions by various persons and bodies and preventing their misappropriation. Hence these recommendations. The Commission had earlier sought the views of state governments and various NGOs on its proposals. Most states with the exception of Madhya Pradesh said there was a need for a new legislation. The proposal for a permanent CRA also did not find favour with Kerala. There was no reply from the NGOs with the lone exception of a local one based in Punjab's Rup Nagar. (Source: *The Indian Express*, August 13, 2005)

Know It: Information Act gets nod

NEW DELHI: The path-breaking Right to Information Act (RTI), giving legal rights to people to seek information from the government and curb corruption, came into force in the country today, placing India among the 55 countries to have such a legislation. The Act, passed by Parliament in the last Budget Session and given Presidential assent on June 15, is aimed at bring about transparency and accountability in the working of public authorities. The new law, which will not be applicable in Jammu and Kashmir, is meant to curb corruption and inefficiency in the government at various levels as it brings within its ambit Central and State administrations, panchayats, local bodies and non-governmental organizations getting public funds. Under the Act, the authorities are required to respond to queries in as little as 48 hours, if it is a matter of life and liberty. The law promises prompt accountability and transparency to climb up several notches, especially as it provides for hefty fines and disciplinary action against erring officials. According to the Act, the Centre has to appoint a Central Information Commission which will consist of a Chief Information Commissioner and Central Information commissioners, not exceeding ten, as may be deemed necessary. (Source: *The Times of India*, August 17, 2005)

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*An elated Koteswara Rao with little Gunasekhar in his subabul plantation, reared from ITC saplings in Ganugunta Village, Prakasam District, Andhra Pradesh.

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