

Nandini

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Voice For The Deprived

Dedicated to the cause of marginalised and downtrodden

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Visually impaired women crave for your attention

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA SPEAKS

TREAT WOMEN AS EQUAL



In the highest truth of the Parabrahman, there is no distinction of sex. We only notice this in the relative plane. And the more the mind becomes introspective the more that idea of difference vanishes. Ultimately when the mind is wholly merged in the homogeneous and undifferentiated Brahman, then such ideas as this is a man or that a woman do not remain at all. We have actually seen this in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Therefore, we need to understand that though outwardly there may be difference between men and women, in their real nature there is none. Therefore if a man can be a knower of Brahman, why cannot a woman attain the same knowledge? Therefore, I was saying that if even one amongst the women became a knower of Brahman, then by the radiance of her personality, thousands of women would be inspired

and awakened to truth and great well-being of the country and society. Do you understand?

Not fully yet. When you will realise that all-illuminating truth of the Atman, then you will see that this idea of sex-distinction has vanished altogether. Then only will you look upon all women as the veritable manifestation of Brahman.

We have seen in Sri Ramakrishna how he had this idea of divine motherhood in every woman, of whatever caste she might be, or whatever might be her worth. It is because I have seen this that I ask you all so earnestly to do likewise and open girls' schools in every village and try to uplift them. If the women are raised, then their children will by their noble actions glorify the name of the country - then will culture, knowledge, power and devotion awaken in the country.

WORK IS INGRAINED IN NATURE OF MAN

Shankara described Karma as indirect help to the manifestation of Jnana and the means for the purification of the mind. But I do not contradict his conclusion that in transcendent knowledge, there is no touch of any work whatsoever. So long as man is within the realm of the consciousness of action and the result of action, he is powerless to sit idle without doing some work.

So, as work is thus ingrained in the very nature of man, then why don't you go on doing such works as are helpful to the manifestation of the knowledge of the Atman?

That all work is the effect of ignorance may be true from the absolute standpoint, but within the sphere of relative consciousness, it has a great utility.

When you will realise the Atman, the doing or non doing of work will be within your control and whatever you will do in that state will be good work, conducive to the well being of Jivas and the world. With the manifestation of Brahman, even the breath you draw will be to the good of Jivas. Then you will no longer have to work by means of conscious planning. Do you understand?

STRUGGLE IS THE SIGN OF LIFE

Let it be. What is there to be afraid of in that? Opposition to a righteous work initiated with moral courage will only awaken the moral power of the initiators the more. That which meets with no obstruction, no opposition, only takes men to the path of moral death. Struggle is the sign of life



Desperate Calls

*You can enjoy your prosperity
only if you share your income with
the deprived and thus discover
the satisfaction that it provides.*

Hearing impaired person needs support for self employment

Sri.P.Venugopal, age 40, is a 60% hearing impaired man.

Sri.P.Venugopal desires to self employ himself. He requests kind hearted persons for financial help to purchase banana fibre extraction machinery. The cost of the machinery is Rs.39,000/-

Contact address: Sri.P.Venugopal S/o.Srittukone,
35/14, Kosath Street, Tiruvannamalai-606 601

Disabled person needs winding machine

Sri R.Vijayakumar has studied upto 10th std. and he is a disabled person. He knows electrical work.

Sri R.Vijayakumar requests kind hearted persons for donation of winding machine that would cost around Rs.6,000/-.

Contact address: Sri R.Vijayakumar
New No.29, Old No.191, Udhyasuriyan Street,
Periyarnagar, Vyasarjadi, Chennai-600 039

Disabled persons need wheel chairs

Sri.V.Santhanam, (age 27 years) S/o.Sri.Vadivel, Gingee,Villupuram and Ms.A.P.Jayasree (age 8 years) D/o.Sri.Paramasivam,Villupuram are poor disabled persons.

Sri.V.Santhanam, and Ms.Charumathi, request kind hearted persons for donation of wheel chairs.

For further details, please contact:

Sri.S.Annamalai,
Poongunam, Kundalapuliyur (PO)
Villupuram Taluk. Tamil Nadu

Orphanage needs support

Annai Women's Welfare Society functioning in Chennai is supporting around 21 children, who are orphans. The organisation needs support to continue it's activities and take more children into it's fold.

For further details, please contact:

Ms.Regamathunisa Begum, Secretary,
Annai Women's Welfare Society,
2nd Block, No.554,Mogappair West, Chennai-600 037
Phone: 9282146369

Visually impaired students need cassettes

The visually challenged students of Goodwill India Foundation, Choolaimedu, Chennai-94 need assistance in reading of their lessons preferably in audio cassettes. Sri.Surendran, working in Southern Railway with the assistance of his colleagues took up this assignment and the process are under way.

At present, reading material for 30 papers/subjects is on hand. Each subject/paper requires 7 cassettes approximately, which is based on the trend of reading/recording.

The volunteers have been able to complete read and record on audio cassettes for 5 papers and the response from both the sides are good. In order to complete the assignment, 175 audio cassettes of 60 minutes duration each are needed.

Contact address: Sri.M.Surendran,
35/12, (Old No.D/12),Jaganathan Colony,
Foxen Street, Perambur, Chennai-600 011
Phone: 9444368171

Poor lady suffering from Leukaemia

Ms. N.Niharika Uday Joshi, age 27 years is suffering from acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia and has been admitted to Bombay Hospital on 21.1.2008 for treatment. The disease was detected during her pregnancy and she has delivered a male child on 16.1.2008.

Duration of the treatment would be one year and the expenses for treatment would be around Rs.5 lakhs.

Her husband Mr. Uday Dhirajlal Joshi is a karmkand pujari doing poojas in various houses and earns Rs.3000/- per month. Both his aged parents are dependent on him.

Please help the lady suffering from Leukaemia.

The cheque may be made in favour of Bombay Hospital Trust and in the reverse of the cheque, please mention "Ms. Niharika Uday Joshi-I.P.No.8301563.

The cheque may be sent to Mr. Uday Dhirajlal Joshi, A/6, Sumangal Building, Shreenagar-Wagle Estate, Thane-400604, Maharashtra (Mobile No. 9324615133 and Landline No.022-25823309

DESPERATE CALLS

Braille editions of J. Krishnamurti books

The National Association for the Blind has evinced interest in producing Braille editions of J. Krishnamurti's books in English and Indian languages for the benefit of the visually impaired persons. In the first phase of the project, Krishnamurti Foundation of India (KFI) hopes to bring out the following braille editions, the estimated costs of which are given below:

Title	Cost (in Rs)
English	
Freedom from the Known	61,500
Education and the Significance of Life	41,820
Krishnamurti for the Young (Vols 1, 2 & 3)	29,520
Hindi	
Freedom from the Known	25,500
Education and the Significance of Life	18,000

Marathi

Freedom from the Known	25,500
Education and the Significance of Life	18,000

Gujarati

Freedom from the Known	25,500
Education and the Significance of Life	18,000

Those who see the importance of the work may kindly donate for this project. One may also consider sponsoring braille editions in other Indian languages. Donations may be sent as Demand Draft or Cheque drawn in favour of Krishnamurti Foundation India, payable at Chennai, and posted to Krishnamurthi Foundation of India (KFI) 124, Greenways Road, Chennai – 600 028.

◆ Donations to KFI are exempt from income tax under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act.

DISABLED ARE AMONG THE MOST EXCLUDED - FINDINGS OF THE WORLD BANK REPORT

Children with disability are around four or five times less likely to be in school than the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children, says a recent World Bank report - "People with Disabilities in India: From commitments to outcome."

The World Bank report has called for additional policy measures such as preventive care for both mother and child, identifying people with disabilities as soon as possible after onset and getting all children with special needs into school.

There is growing evidence that people with disabilities comprise between four and eight per cent of the Indian population - around 40 to 90 million people.

"People with disabilities are among the most excluded in society," notes the report. With better education and more access to jobs "India's 40 million to 90 million disabled people can generate higher growth, which could benefit the country as a whole." What is more, it says that people with disabilities are also victims of "multiple deprivations."

Households with disabled members are significantly poorer than average, with lower consumption and fewer assets. Disabled adults also have far lower employment rates than the general population - down from 43 per cent in 1991 to 38 per cent in 2002, even amidst high economic growth. This, the report points out, "despite the fact that studies show that disabled employees have extremely good performance rates."

Some of the findings of the report are: There are substantial differences in socio-economic outcomes, social stigma and access to services by disability type, with those with mental illness and mental retardation in a particularly

poor position. There are also major urban rural differences in outcomes. Gender, class and regional variations are also significant in many cases.

Estimates suggest that disability due to communicable diseases could be halved between 1990 and 2020, but disability due to injuries/accidents is set to double by then. A more than 40 per cent increase in the share of disability due to non communicable diseases has also been projected.

The educational attainment rate of the disabled are much lower - with 52 per cent illiteracy against a 35 per cent average for the general population.

Illiteracy is high among children across all categories, even in the best performing States. A significant share of out of school children is those with disabilities: Kerala has 27 per cent and Tamil Nadu over 33 per cent.

In early 2006, the government approved a national policy on Persons with Disabilities.

Till now, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka are the only States to have a draft disabilities policy. The Chhattisgarh draft policy can be considered 'best practice,' and could provide a model for future national and state level policy development.



Readers' forum

Readers' forum provides space for the enlightened readers to give expression to their views on a variety of socio economic issues that is of relevance to the society.

Further enrichment of the journal with your thoughtful inputs would certainly go a long way in promoting the cause that the journal seeks to espouse.



Harsh experience of the visually impaired women

Dear Sir,

The brain storming session on the problems of the visually impaired women that Nandini Voice For The Deprived had arranged on the Republic Day discussed the problems of the visually impaired women and held out the plethora of causes, sources and symptoms of neglect, lack of sympathy and understanding of government agencies and the public.

The grievances pointed out are real though they tend to vary with individuals. For instance, a visually impaired violinist said that she could not get a posting as a music teacher since she had not completed the 10th std. though she is well qualified in music. My sympathy lies with the visually impaired artist and she could have been helped if the officer had shown understanding.

Society has to be made aware of the handicaps of the deprived lot. Welfare organisations will have to play a more, collective, active, result oriented role.

Chennai Garland N Rajagopalan, I.A.S. Rtd.

Plight of visually impaired women

Dear Sir,

It is truly heart rending to know the conditions of these unfortunate sisters in our APNA BHARAT. What more these people could be expected to do than what they have accomplished already. A post graduation in their respective fields, against the numerous odds that they are sure to have faced.

For those of us, who choose to migrate to foreign lands to take advantage of the better opportunities available there, this gives a distinctly uncomfortable feeling, what with the contrasting treatment meted out to such people in developed countries and countries like our own.

For instance, in Canada, anyone who is remotely mentally or physically ill is given a lifelong monthly allowance of around 970 dollars in addition to subsidised housing and maintenance expenditures from time to time. This is by a Programme called Ontario Disability Support Programme (ODSP) and the great thing is that no one grudges it, as the society feels that it is their responsibility to take care of the less fortunate ones.

The miserable conditions of such unfortunate visually impaired women would have ensured the demise of the Government in a developed country, for this reason alone.

Well, politicians are the same everywhere, guided as they are by their instinct for survival. But the difference lies in the ability of the people to force the politicians to act in the right direction and electing the right people, in the first place.

Come to think of it, no problem is insurmountable with a little bit of commonsense and political will. Management is basically commonsense, as proved and being proved conclusively by the Bombay Dubbah wallahs, as they are known. On loud thinking, I am tempted to ask the question as to what would prevent the government from opening up public sector undertakings and government offices in different categories, exclusively for the disabled.

For all you know, these people would prove to be much more committed and competent in comparison to the present day public sector employee and government servant, as they would have a point to prove. Such a concept would be to the great advantage of the management and it would possibly be even admired universally for its innovation and originality. By such an approach, the government would be living true to the concept of the welfare state and would have everything to gain.

Government has to be organising various programmes in different spheres of human activity with exclusive focus on the welfare of the disabled. Only the government could be expected to organise such activities keeping in mind the magnitude of the task.

North York, Toronto, Canada Usha Krishnamurthy

Suicide by farmers

Dear Sir,

The recent reports in the press is very alarming. Hundreds of our farmers are committing suicide. Why are they ending their lives?

Who are the Indian farmers? Surely they are the people, the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi loved and respected so much. Mahatma Gandhi said "I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its cities but in its villages".

Gram Swaraj was his dream. Today, India is ignoring its father the Mahatma and doing things all against his principles. The government of India and the state governments have turned into corporate friendly and are having blind eye towards the suffering farmers who work hard in the fields to provide food for the entire nation. All political parties need the poor farmers' votes only during the election and after that they forget the farmers.

Because of the delayed welfare scheme done half heartedly by the government and bank agents adopting cruel methods while collecting the dues from the farmers, it results in the suicide of self respecting farmers.

It is also a fact that the loans of hundreds of rich corporates and politicians are declared as bad debts and several persons who got big money did not return even a single rupee to the bank. During bank strikes etc, the employees union display the names of such rich VIP corporates. Indeed, they are thick skinned and they never bother.

After 60 long years, our Babuji's soul should be shedding tears for the death of each farmer of this land of agriculture and it is not good for the country and its people.

Chennai D.Vedamuthu

Whither youngsters?

Dear Sir,

The child is the father of man, so goes an English saying. There is a corresponding Tamil proverb which means that the growth of a plant can be judged even at its budding stage.

It is necessary that even as a crop has to be tended carefully after sowing the seed, the children have to be taken care and provided attention till they reach the adolescent stage.

The present day parents, immersed as they are in their own avocation and pursuits, hardly devote time to watch and control the behaviour and activities of their wards. The children often grow up in an atmosphere of unchecked freedom and sometimes develop undesirable qualities and tastes.

It is sad that many students smoke, a good percentage take liquor and some become drug addicts.

The print and visual media attract them with stories and scenes of sex and violence to promote their own business.

Recent shooting incidents involving students at Gurgaon and Shantiniketan indicate the mindset of many students.

Our country's future would be bleak, if youngsters are not moulded properly.

Coimbatore M.R.Pillai

Changing names and erecting statues

Dear Sir,

We have to learn lessons from Singapore and Hong kong. Their main concern is anchored on economy clubbed with cleanliness.

But, our government and politicians are pre occupied with erecting statues, changing street names and even shifting the new year day. They do not seem to be adequately concerned about developing our national economy at grass root levels to push our nation as an entity of the developed world.

Vote bank politics and mass publicity oriented advertisements lead to wastage of national time and resources. Our youth, who constitute rising population, should cry a halt to all such nefarious games of politicians.

Chennai K.N.Narayana Pillai

Is the word Dalit correct ?

Dear Sir,

Recently, the National Commission For Sheduled Caste has suggested to all state governments to stop using the term Dalit from their office record and it opined that the term Dalit is not only unconstitutional and also it has not been mentioned in the exisiting laws.

The political parties in the country and the governments have been using the word Dalit to divide the Hindu society with political motives. They should listen to the National Commission for Scheduled Caste and stop using the word Dalit

Kalyan (W) Maharashtra Sridhar V.Kulkarni

NEED FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION FOR PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

Dear Sir,

Every visually impaired woman, who spoke during the recent meeting organised by Nandini Voice For The Deprived categorically said that they require no sympathy, but only recognition of talent. They do not need out of the way help, but only understanding and empathy.

I am of the view that unless the visually impaired and physically challenged persons fight for their causes, no benefit would happen to them.

The existing political parties shout about reservation for various castes and religious minorities. But, no political party has addressed the plight of the physically challenged persons in a meaningful way.

The physically challenged persons should be duly represented in Assembly in each State and in the Parliament. Depending on the strength of Assembly in each State, 1 or 2 or 3 seats should be reserved exclusively for the physically challenged and the seats should be contested and won by them only. Depending on the number of seats for the Parliament, each State should reserve 1 or 2 seats exclusively for the physically challenged. Their voice should be heard in the Assembly Halls and Parliament House, so that their concerns can be effectively addressed by them.

Once they become a part of our political process, their grievances in the health and educational sectors can be set right to a large extent.

Chennai G.Krishnan, moraihydrocarbon@rediffmail.com

VALUE BASED EDUCATION - GREAT EFFORTS OF V-SET

It was reported that "one XIth std. student shot a lady at Thiruchengodu".

The lady had a sports material shop. The boy went to the shop to get a cricket bat. After seeing all the bats, he did not purchase anything. The lady got irritated and said, "you don't have any means to buy anything, useless fellow!" The boy visited the shop next morning with his grandfather's pistol and shot the lady. Now the lady is struggling for life. The boy said to police "the lady insulted me yesterday and I have done revenge".

Such incidents show the need for value based education in schools for children. This is what V-Set is doing.

Read about the yeomen service that Mr.Ravichandran, the facilitator of V-Set in Chennai is doing in northern part of Chennai.



V-Set was started in 2003 with the objective to impart value based education amongst students with its head quarters at V-Set Value Park at Wayanad in Kerala. V-Set is striving to spread the message of humaneness to students in schools through practical value education classes in schools.

Mr.Ravichandran, facilitator of V-Set in Chennai is doing full time service in schools. Every day he goes to schools and takes classes on life skills. V-Set is now serving in 20 schools in North Chennai.

The schools accommodate the programme in the regular time itself.

The programme aims

- * To kindle humaneness in students
- * To give strength to students to face the challenges of life
- * To promote personality development

Mr.Ravichandran says that through the sustained interaction with students, he found that the sharing of love and concern is the need of the hour. Especially in schools of north Chennai, many of the children are coming from underprivileged section. In many cases, father is a drunkard and the mother has to go for menial jobs to sustain the family. The much needed attention, love, care and concern is not given to children.

When asked about the response, Mr.Ravichandran said:

"Usually, we do 3 or 4 V-Set programmes in schools on regular days. But sometimes, we have to do 5 programmes in different schools.

The response is truly inspiring. For example, we conducted a programme on 'Give respect and take respect' in a boys high school. We introduced three magic words in the programme, viz. "please, sorry and thank you". When we asked the students to apply these words in any situation, many students responded in various ways.

VIIth std boy Dinesh said so nicely.

Dinesh: "Sir, every morning I come to school by bus during peak hours. Lot of rush is there.

I give my bag to some mother. When I give the bag, I say please keep the bag. Again, when I get down, I take back the bag and say thank you. If in the rush, my bag would slightly hit somebody I say, sorry!"

"We were truly amazed!

In another girls school, we did a programme on 'Facing insult'. Nearly 60 girls attended the programme. We explained to the students that everyone has to face insult some time or other in life. The programme would give the students awareness and prepare them to face insult in an unruffled way.

After my describing a few situations and couple of stories on the subject, every one started sharing their experience. One girl student started listing 'ideas to face insult'!. She wrote - donkeys and monkeys do not insult their fellow tribe but men do. Who is better?"

The students are all so receptive and when a girl was sharing her experience, she was so moved and started weeping."

The presentation made by V-Set is non-academic and has no teaching or preaching class. The role of V-Set volunteer is one of facilitator who facilitates the programme in V-Set endeavor. V-Set calls the programme 'refinement through involvement'.

V-Set says that educated house wives with spare time can do great contribution in this service. They can select one or two schools nearby their home and conduct Value Education classes according to their convenience every week. This will surely reduce violence and suicides in schools.

Those interested to get details of V-Set programme, may contact

Vishwa Seva Educational Trust (V-Set)
#52 Peddu Naicken Street, Mint, Chennai-600 079
Mobile: +91-9444089975
chennai@vset.org www.vset.org

PROBLEMS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

Nandini Voice For The Deprived, organized a brain storming session to discuss the problems faced by visually impaired women on 26th January, 2008 (Republic Day) at Youth Hostel , Indira Nagar. Adyar, Chennai -20. The meeting was presided over by G. Chidambaranathan, President, Tamil Nadu Handicapped Welfare Federation Trust, Chennai

The meeting was addressed by the following visually impaired women.

- * **Ms. P. Aruna Devi** MSW (age 30 years)
- * **Ms. A. Meenakshi sundari** B.A. B.Ed. (age 32 years)
- * **Ms. M. Saraswathy** M.A. B.Ed. (age 26 years)
- * **Ms. S. Sudhamani** B.A. B.L. (age 27 years)
- * **Ms. Meenakshi** B.A.B.Ed. (age 35 years)
- * **Ms. Uma Maheshwari** - Physiotherapist (age 32 years)
- * **Ms. T. Usha**, Violinist (age 40 years)

The meeting was attended by social activists, representatives of several women's organizations, bureaucrats and retired IAS officers.

Several participants in the meeting interacted with the visually impaired women and provided their views and suggestions.



VISUALLY IMPAIRED MS. SARASWATHI EXPRESSING HER ANGUISH

Objective Of The Meeting :

While the problems of visually impaired women are discussed in various forums , rarely visually impaired women themselves get an opportunity to express their views and represent their problems .

The objective of the meeting was to provide an opportunity to the visually impaired women to express their

feelings and provide a better understanding of their problems to the society and to evolve recommendations for consideration of the government and the society.

Proceedings of the Meeting :

During the meeting, several visually impaired women poured their thoughts and expressed their feelings with clarity and eloquence. The proceedings of the meeting gave

a new insight into the problems of the visually impaired women, which the entire society should know and understand.

Highlights of discussions during the meeting.

1) Visually impaired women expressed their disappointment that the government and the society extend whatever help to them only on the basis of sympathy and not on the basis of recognition of their rights and privileges. This attitude creates an overall impression in the society, as if they are a burden on the society and second class citizens and not equal to people with vision. It was stressed that the visually impaired women have a vibrant mental faculty and mental vision and given an opportunity, they can be on an equal level with anyone else.

2) Though several of the government schemes are well intentioned and well drafted, the quality of implementation is far from desirable level. Therefore, the benefits do not reach the visually impaired women adequately.

This problem is due to the lack of commitment of the government officials in the concerned departments, who are in charge of implementing the measures. They need to be sensitized.

3) The visually impaired women face severe problems due to lack of hostel facilities. With most of them belonging to lower income group and with family members not taking care of them after the passing away of their parents, they are driven from pillar to post to find a place to stay with safety and dignity. The government was requested to build exclusive hostels for visually impaired women in towns and cities urgently.

4) Normal sighted people rarely come forward to marry visually impaired women. The government was requested to encourage sighted men to marry visually impaired women by providing incentives, just in the case of inter caste marriages. There should be clear stipulation that such incentives would be withdrawn, if such marriages would break down.

5) The banks and financial institutions, in almost all cases, refuse to provide educational loan and self employment loan for visually impaired women, insisting on providing securities, though it is against the declared policies of the government. Even insurance companies often refuse to provide insurance coverage for these women on the ground that they face security risk. In all these cases, the visually impaired women find that government's policy announcements have no relevance for them as they are often not implemented in the desired

manner. For getting everyone of their rights, the visually impaired women have to battle it out.

6) The private sector rarely provide jobs for the visually impaired women and in the government departments, even the quota of reserved jobs are often not filled. This situation cause tremendous frustration and unemployment amongst visually impaired women.

7) The visually impaired women feel sad that the society often remains unconcerned about their plight. Several instances were cited to prove this condition. While people are willing to extend monetary help or material support, very few people are willing to get actively involved in solving their problems or making personal sacrifices to help their cause.

8) The practice of having caste based reservations in jobs and educational institutions amongst visually impaired people was called as crude and unimaginative guideline. What can be a more backward condition than visual impairment itself and how can a further caste based difference be insisted amongst visually impaired women for preference in jobs?

Prognosis :

Apart from the government, the society should be more actively involved in protecting the interests of the visually impaired women who suffer from the combination of most of them belonging to lower income group, being women and then being with visual impairment.

There is great need to sensitise the society and particularly those belonging to middle and upper income group, so that they would realize their duty towards the visually impaired women. The media should help the cause in a big way.

What the visually impaired women need is not alms but opportunities and pro active measures to help them realize their potentials.

The present conditions are far from satisfactory and those with affordable income would stand criticized by history, if they would remain unconcerned and self centred. Mere giving money or material on compassionate grounds is not enough, but much more active involvement in helping the visually impaired women is necessary with right attitude.

While the population of visually impaired women in one state like Tamil Nadu is around 4.5 lakhs, the number of people with affordable income in the state is several times more than this figure. If every person with affordable income will take some efforts to help the visually impaired women, their problem can be wiped out in one stroke.

ANALYSIS OF EXTENT OF BLINDNESS IN TAMIL NADU

Contributed by K V S Krishna

The details on extent of blindness in Tamil Nadu have been compiled by Mr.K.V.S.Krishna on the basis of detailed study on the subject.

It appears that adequate investigative study on the extent of blindness in Tamil Nadu on micro level and the causes contributing to the blindness are yet to be carried out.

Unhygienic conditions, contaminated water, lack of nutrition of mother as well as hereditary factors could be contributory causes for the blindness

Sri.K.V.S.Krishna can be contacted on phone No.28152079, Chennai.

I. Areas with below 1% of blindness

S.No.	Place	Population	Blind	Percentage
1	Karur	933791	6024	0.645
2.	Salem	2992754	22502	0.751
3.	Tiruvannamalai	2181853	21734	0.996
		6108398	50260	0.822

II. Areas with 1%to 1.5% blindness

4	Villupuram	2943917	32700	1.110
5	Namakkal	1495661	15592	1.042
6	Chennai	4216268	51392	1.218
7	Kanchipuram	2869920	35221	1.227
8	Vellore	3482970	43250	1.241
9	Tiruvallur	2738866	35004	1.278
10	Virudhunagar	1751548	25297	1.444
11	Thanjavur	2205375	32314	1.465
		21704525	270770	1.247

III. 1.5 to 1.75% blindness

12	Tirunelveli	2801194	42905	1.531
13.	Erode	2579067	42924	1.687
14	Pudukottai	1452269	24802	1.707
15.	Tuticorin	1565743	26927	1.719
16	Nilgiris	764826	13188	1.724
17	Perambalur	1181029	20448	1.731

18	Madurai	2562279	44091	1.720
19	Cuddalore	2280530	39503	1.732
		15186937	254788	1.678

IV. 1.75 to 2.0% blindness

20	Ramanathapuram	1183321	21074	1.780
21	Theni	1094724	19553	1.786
22	Coimbatore	4224107	77671	1.838
23	Dharmapuri	2833252	55063	1.943
		9335404	173361	1.857

V. Over 2% blindness

24	Tiruchy	2388831	48519	2.031
25	Tiruvarur	1165213	24013	2.060
26	Sivaganga	1150753	25878	2.248
27	Dindigul	1918960	44120	2.299
28	Nagapatinam	1487055	33839	2.275
29	Kanyakumari	1669763	38515	2.306
		9780575	214884	2.191

Note

There can be a strong correlation between below poverty line percentage on various districts with that of blindness percentage. Districtwise BPL data needs to be secured.

Various factors for variation ranging from 0.65% to 2.30% needs to be found.



LET US HASTEN THE RESURRECTION OF GANDHIJI

Gandhiji's philosophy of life and work was: "The true source of rights is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If, leaving duties unperformed, we run after rights, they will escape us like the will-o-the-wisp. The more we pursue them, the farther will they

fly". This was the Mahatma's message to the United Nations Human Rights.

And we have forgotten Gandhiji, nay betrayed him, even though we hypocritically invoke his name for vote garnering, at the time of elections. Hence all our miseries and frustrations.

We should not forget Gandhiji's message that character is the humus on which everything noble and enduring

grows that end and means are indissolubly interlinked and that right means alone will lead to right ends.

What we can do and what we must do, is to imbibe the Spirit of Gandhi's View of Life. The Gandhian spark should glow in every Indian mind. The Gandhian tradition should guide all our activities. The Gandhian ideals should be lived up to by each one of us in our individual family and institutional life, irrespective of what others do or fail to do. This will usher in transparency, purity and probity in public, which are the basic ingredients of clean, efficient and democratic governance.

Let us tarry no more. Let us hasten the resurrection of Gandhiji. Then and then alone all will be well with India and the Indian people.

Courtesy: Bhawan's Book University

HAVE WE UNDERSTOOD NAXAL ISSUE? THEY ARE VICTIMS OF DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The handling of the Naxalite issue by the Union and State governments has come under severe criticism from a former Indian Police Service Officer and author who has studied the issue for over three decades.

"Neither the Union government nor the State governments have understood the real reasons behind the growth of the Naxalite movements in the country," said Dr.K.S.Subramanian, a 1963 batch IPS Officer who held important positions in the ministry of home affairs before retiring in 1997.

Dr Subramanian, who has authored the book "Political Violence and the Police in India", came down heavily on agencies like the Intelligence Bureau for failing to understand ground realities."Our IB officers are quite good at writing secret reports which are cherished and enjoyed by their bosses. They are serving their political masters and not the constitution," Dr.Subramanian said.

Courtesy:Deccan Chronicle,30th January 2007



'The government has not understand what the Naxalite movement is all about.'

"Nobody can describe what and who a Naxalite is. As far as I know, the Naxalites don't have any ideology. All those who are termed Naxalites by the government and other law enforcing agencies are victims of our development process. They are either tribals or scheduled castes uprooted from their own lands in the name of infrastructure development. They have genuine grievances which are being ignored by the powers that be," Dr.K.S.Subramanian said.

According to Dr.Subramanian, the growth of the Naxalite movement in the central tribal belt of Chhattisgarh

and Madhya Pradesh was not surprising. "The atrocities against the tribal communities in this central tribal belt have shown significant increase during 2001-04. In 2001, 2021 serious crimes were committed against the tribals in these two states and this figure shot up to 2,343 in 2005," said Dr Subramanian, quoting the reports of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

Instead of solving the basic problem which forced people to take up arms, the government is increasing the number of paramilitary battalions in the country under the pretext of tackling the Naxalites.

"The Central Paramilitary Forces (CPF) have literally doubled over the last two decades. The home ministry report says that the manpower in the CPFs have increased from 4.29 lakh in 1988 to 7.05 lakh in 2005. Over the last two years, the ministry has added another 200 battalions to the existing CPFs," Dr Subramanian said. The Union government is also setting up India Reserve battalions in all states.

Accorded to Dr.Subramanian, who holds a Ph.D.for his study on the ideological evolution of the Communist movement in India, the mere increase in the manpower of the CPFS would not solve the Naxalite issue. "The government should try to understand the social background of the naxalite problem. Decentralisation of power is the only solution to fighting the naxalites," he said.



INDIA NEEDS MORE AREA FOR AGRICULTURE AND NOT LESS



The recent steps initiated by the governments for the creation of Special Economic Zones all over the country by acquiring agriculture land should cause great concern.

The country's agriculture production is nearly stagnant for the last several years, as new areas for

agriculture farming are not available. On the other hand, when existing agricultural land are being converted for housing projects or setting up industries, it would only inevitably lead to fall in agriculture production.

It would be a disturbing situation, if a largely agriculture oriented country like ours, with majority of people depending on agriculture for employment and survival, have to resort to import of rice and wheat in large quantity.

By acquiring agricultural land for Special Economic Zones, the Government appears to be interested in increasing industrial production at the cost of agricultural production.

Now, there is alarming indication that the country can not meet the requirement of wheat and has to import wheat in large quantity by 2020.

India's wheat requirement will increase to 92 to 100 million tonne in

2020 from the current level of 65 to 70 million tonne, says Chairman of Wheat Products Promotion Society.

Wheat consumption in the country has been increasing year-on-year. Currently, of the total 70 to 75 million tonne of annual production, 60 to 65 million tonne is used for consumption while the remaining wheat is used for seed and other farming purposes.

In fact, the crop area under wheat cultivation has also been declining year-on-year, as farmers are switching over to other activities. The wheat acreage declined by 2% to 27.5 million hectares this year.

The present productivity for wheat cultivation stands around 2.5 tonne per hectare and it has to be increased to atleast 4.5 tonne per hectare by adopting appropriate farm mechanism. Instead of taking steps towards this, the government is converting agricultural land to land for industries.

FARMER SUICIDES IN MAHARASHTRA Is the Government concerned ?

The statistics are disturbing. As many as 279 farmers from the sugar rich belt of western Maharashtra have committed suicide since 2001, with 126 deaths having been registered in 2007 alone. And in Pune district, the toll is 41 deaths since 2001, with 13 happening last year.

A report submitted by the Pune divisional commissioner's office to the state government on January 31 this year reveals that the highest number of suicides (81) in the sugar belt since 2001

were registered in Satara district. Sangli recorded 67 suicides in the same period, while Solapur and Kolhapur registered 56 and 33 deaths respectively. Pune district reported only two suicides in 2005, but the figure shot up dramatically to 26 the next year.

The families of 155 deceased farmers have been given Rs.1 lakh ex-gratia by the state government. Inquiries into 27 suicides are still pending. It appears that the government thinks that all it has to do is only to extend by some exgratia payment

That farmers in western Maharashtra are also committing suicide is shocking because the region was once considered the sugar growing hub of the state..

However, farmer leaders in the region blame the decline in the co-operative movement for the distributing trend. "Most suicides in western Maharashtra have occurred in well irrigated areas, not in drought affected places. With the cooperative movement going downhill, farmers are increasingly depending on private money lenders," says activist.

DWINDLING PERCAPITA LAND AVAILABILITY Contributed by Sri. K.V.S. Krishna

One important matter is that the availability of land which was 0.27ha per capita a decade ago has gone down to 0.18ha and this will slide to 0.158ha (year 2010). 0.133 ha(year

2020) and to 0.118ha(year 2050) with the population going up to 1200, 1420 and 1600 million people respectively.

After failing to remove 30 years of stagnation in agriculture, is India trying

to over industrialise?. We would then export industrial products and import agricultural commodities like rice, wheat, maize, sugar, oils and fat etc.

+ + +

A CHIEF MINISTER'S ANNUAL INCOME JUMPS TO Rs 60 CRORE WHAT IS THE SOURCE AND HOW DO THESE POLITICIANS EARN?

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati is growing richer by the year. Last year, her income was estimated at Rs 52 crore, while she has already grossed Rs 60 crore and is expected to close the fiscal with an even bigger kitty.

Until the December quarter, this so called dalit leader had paid Rs 15 crore advance tax. In the 33% income tax slab, this works out to an income of around Rs 45 crore and if the trend continues between December 15 and March 31, 2008, she could end the year with an income of Rs.60 crore. Indeed, she could close the year even with a much higher income.

The BSP chief has attributed her remarkable financial rise to 'gifts' from her generous supporters. Are her "dalit supporters" so rich?

Based on her Rs 9.7 crore tax payout on December 15, Mayawati was already ranked 18th in the all-India individual taxpayers category, a questionable rise for the former government school teacher. And based on her I-T payments till December, she was placed 19th.

She is ranked a few notches below bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan in the advance tax list. Not only is Mayawati's income more than that of any politician, she ranks higher than the Ambani brothers, Birlas, Bachchans, Ratan Tata and Infosys' Nandan Nilekani. Kumaramangalam Birla trails this so called dalit leader way behind in 57th place, while the richest cricketer Tendulkar is a distant 85th.

Mayawati's explanation about the turnaround in her fortunes would appear to be an unbelievable and dishonest story to many, but was accepted last year by the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal which legitimized her claim. The script is likely to remain the same this year as well. More so, she is in power now.

Mayawati in her statements made before the taxmen and to the CBI, which is investigating her in a disproportionate assets case, has claimed that her supporters had given her huge amounts of cash and pledged their personal properties "out of love and affection" and for the welfare of the downtrodden of dalits. Can anyone believe this?

AWARD FOR PRIME MINISTER

Any ardent admirer of Dr. Manmohan Singh and particularly for his knowledge of economics and high level of personnel integrity, would have felt highly disturbed to see him in the television show receiving the award from the TV channel NDTV.

Prime ministership is a very high position in this country and why should Prime Minister allow himself to be given an award by anyone in the country, as there cannot be a bigger award than being Prime Minister.

Accepting such award would really contribute to promote the popularity of the private TV channel business organisation and the Prime Minister has subjected himself to the possibility of being attributed motives of 'helping a business house'.

One would wonder as to why he decided to accept this award and participate in the meeting. Probably, he never expected that the television interviewers would keep him standing and waiting while talking to Rajnikanth

on all sorts of earthy subjects. The media men certainly gave an impression as if the Prime Minister standing nearby is a matter of no importance and Rajnikanth only mattered for those few minutes.

Even the questions addressed to the Prime Minister by the interviewer gave an impression of not caring for his position. The whole scene widely watched all over the country would have given an impression that the Prime Minister is a very tolerant person and would even tolerate such humiliation. The Prime Minister talked about his responsibilities to one billion people in the country. The one billion people in this country would desire to see Dr. Manmohan Singh as a strong Prime Minister who would assert himself and send a message to everyone that he is the man in command.

The TV people should be condemned for subjecting the Prime



Minister to such a situation and they owe an apology to the Prime Minister.

If not, Dr Manmohan Singh should express his disapproval in strong terms. This country still with 350 million people below poverty line have the hope on the Prime Minister and would certainly want a strong and decisive Prime Minister who alone can deliver goods. For a leader, honesty and competence by itself are no substitute for assertiveness.

CONTRASTING APPROACHES TO THE ADOLESCENT

Contributed by Sri.N.S.Sankararaman, Canada
E-mail:ns_sankara@yahoo.co.in

I was deeply disturbed by the news of one more instance of suicide by an Indian adolescent by name Vinay.

I also happened to be watching a discussion aired on the topic in a national TV channel in which the panelists were a school principal and a psychiatrist. The rationale and scientific explanation that the psychiatrist was stating on the reasons for the repeated spectacle of adolescents committing suicide in India seemed to be going over the head of his co panelist.

In a nutshell, the psychiatrist opined that peer pressure and tactless handling of the child by the parents and school authorities place excessive emotional pressure on the child who is not able to cope up with it. So suicide is taken recourse to, as an escape mechanism. The reality is that the average parent in India lacks the understanding, imagination or tact to be able to provide effective emotional support to the child, who suffers for want of an outlet to ventilate his frustration.

In the Western World, statistics show that some adolescents do have a fanciful notion about suicide and even keep talking about their supposedly serious intention, but seldom do they resort to it. Successful suicide attempts are more in the middle age than in the case of adolescents in the western world, which probably is an indication that the pressures are more and real in the middle age than in the age of adolescence.

Suicide attempt is generally made by the concerned, when the stress tolerance levels do not match up to the situational stress. At this point, the Subject may also convince himself that he would be sending an effective message to the world and his community by way of what he perceives as settling scores, by committing suicide. Hence, it is basically a combination of factors that forces a person to attempt suicide.

Unfortunately, the average parent in India are not educated enough to realise that it is unfair to pass on their own anxieties and pressures to the child. In fact, they do not even realise that they are unwittingly doing so. The result is that the child develops undesirable attitudes, world view and personality which stays for life.

Strangely, I was reminded of my own experience in Canada with the school authorities of a neighbourhood school to get my 16 year old son admitted.

Conditioned by the experiences that all of us parents undergo in the Indian schools when the parents themselves are as anxious (or made to feel anxious) as the school children at the hands of the school authorities, I was not sure as to what to expect from the school authorities in the unfamiliar environment. Pleasantly for me, when I met with the Vice Principal, who is a middle aged white man of an East European descent, it was amusing but enjoyable for me to be interviewed about the conditions in India and how outsourcing from the developed countries would affect stake holder countries one way or other. The man has just about then finished reading a book titled 'The world is flat' which was full of loaded opinions about India and China and it appeared as though the Principal had fixed up an appointment with me to know my views on the topic.

Well, as is my won't I made the most out of the situation and finally after about an hour, the academic finally turned to the purpose of my visit and just signed the paper, as if it is not within his jurisdiction to reject my son's candidature. The system in Canada is that there is no concept of rejection of admission for a boy in the neighbourhood to which the school is assigned to tutor.

Well begun is half done, goes the saying. It cannot be more true in the case of an adolescent child at a delicate and difficult age having to cope up with the pressures of the world, which he knows only hazily, though he would not admit.

All this is not to say that the adolescents of the Western World do not have psychological problems. Here the problems are caused by the parents' omissions, as parents let loose their children off beyond the age of 16, whereas in India, it is due to the mishandling of the adolescents by the parents and the society.

GAAR ADVT.

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