

Dear Mr

Jan 2000 was mostly spent in India, and most of you know about our last 6-monthtrip. To gain some new exposure, we took a job with Census 2000 for two months. This fetched some more money, which was required to sustain us. Then later on I took a contract job with a structural firm for only 4 hours per day. But a break came when Dr. Ravi Chopra came from India to talk about the drought situation in India -especially in Rajasthan, Gujrat, Orissa and Jharkhand.

We offered our services for the cause when he spoke at the Kellogg Center of Michigan State University in Lansing MI during June 2000. Dr. Chopra is Director of People's Science Institute (PSI) of Dehradun, Utteranchal and obtained his Ph.D. from U.S.A., PSI is doing a very fine job in eradicating the drought conditions in above-mentioned states for last 20 years. International Service Society (ISS) offered us support if we were ready to go to India and report back to the US donors, about how their contribution is utilized. Our job was to see the various projects under PSI and Tarun Bhatrat Sangh and few other organizations in West Bengal, Orissa. We agreed to spend four months between November 14th 2000-March6th 2001 in India. Besides, we were able to celebrate our 30th marriage anniversary at Allahabad on 14th Jan 2001 in the middle of Maha Kumbh, which happens to be biggest fair in the world. We were more than excited. This way we could again celebrate New Year with our family in Meerut, without their help we could not have done anything.

We are happy to report that our experiences with Villagers in some 120 or so villages in 9 states of India were very encouraging. This visit filled the communication gap we feel exists between us and so called poor people who live in the villages of our great country India. After talking to thousands of villagers during our trip we reached to the conclusion that they are neither poor, nor lazy or stupid but lack information. Information which at every meeting we provided and could see their thusiasm and spirit to learn and be independent. We can go back any time and communicate with them because that is the surest way to mobilize them. We stayed with the villagers in their homes and ate whatever was provided with love. Our only condition was it should be hot and fresh. And that we will only sleep inside a net where there are mosquitoes around. We learned about few good things, like Ox can be used for generating Electricity and cultivating thefarmland, and even women or older men and children can do farming in much relaxed way sitting comfortably under the shade of umbrella and have their own water bottle for drinking. These and many other useful inventions and information we provided to the villagers because these inventions were from cities and farmers which the villagers did not know about. We are happy to report that this trip has become a high point in our life. We have learnt so much from illiterate farmers that we cannot describe it here in this small article.

And we celebrated our marriage anniversary with some 2.5 Million other souls at Allahabad during Maha Kumbh, we stayed there 5 days one time and two days another time. We used to walk some 20 or 25 kilometers every day, and ate whatever Prashad we got at Hare Krishna (ISKCON). It was not only biggest fair but you can practically see all significant, Dharmacharyas and sects in India of Hindus all in one place. You can see at the same time different ways to express them and worship their Ishta Devatas. Best part was, you can join any or all worships any time. Participating in Kumbh became a milestone in our life. Also at this holy place our beloved Babooji left his physical body on Dec. 8th 2000 in Kriyayog ashram, Jhnusi at the bank of Ganges to unite his soul with God.

We also attended Youth camp at Rangpoe, Sikkim where some 1039 youths from all26 states of India assembled under National Youth Project, Directed by Shri Subba Rao ji from Dec 1 to 4th 2000. For those of you who don't know Subbaraoji, he was instrumental in dacoit surrender in Chambal ghafi. He is 76 years young, unmarried to do Bharatmata's seva. We shared some of our thoughts about our life style like not drinking tea, coke and coffee, not supporting Multi nationals for tooth paste, soap, shampoo, etc. with youths. Their comments were, "we can save a lot of money and keep our life simple."

The countryside (villages) with the help of some very good dedicated and honest Non Government Organizations (NGO) is changing for the better, in spite of government and city dwellers' general apathy towards them. In India like any other country city dwellers think they have paid for the produce and milk grown by villagers, and that is the end of story. How they live and what sacrifices these villagers make to make city dwellers' life easy, is not their concern. But we are happy to note things are changing although at slow pace. All the NGOs who are doing good job in adverse circumstances need to be congratulated and encouraged. Our decision that we are not going to waste our time and energy in negative talk/criticism gave us tremendous strength and peace of mind. We could also see the suffering of Kutch before and after the great earthquake. The less we say the better, but he need is so large and we know every body has pitched in, but we might have to open our hearts a little more ASAP.

Let us add some more things, which people want us to write as well. We see the urgent need of improvement in following areas:

- A. India is not a poor country, but distribution system needs to be better.
 - B. Communication from one level to other is lacking.
 - C. Government programs don't reach to the people, for whom they are planned, people have no way to contribute to the planning or its execution.
 - D. Majority of Indians are honest (72 Crores) but not united and have no means to voice their opinions.
 - E. Many good thing which are happening in Villages does not get any exposure in Media or otherwise.
- The following entitlements, which people are not aware of, are stated for benefit of our membership at large.
1. People over age of 65, the blind, and widows can get a pension of RS. 200/month.
 - a. Each person in this category also can get about 10 kg rice /wheat a month as well.
 2. People below poverty line (BPL) get up to RS. 20,000 from govt. for building homes. Known as Indira Awas Yojana, This list is made with the help of local panchayat leaders.
 3. Women get seed money to get Self Help Group schemes (SHG) started in their villages, in order to get their earning potential upgraded.
 4. Women can do farming using recently developed ox driven Mechanical Plough cost about RS. 17,500. It is developed by:
Bharatiya Cattle Resource Development Foundation
Ahimsa Sthal Anuvart Marg Mehrauli New Delhi 110030,
- A project supported by Indians in USA we should all be proud of. (Indian Relief and Development Fund, web page "WWW.irdf.org")
5. Surbhi Sansthan of Varanasi UP, developed an ox driven Generator for electricity (app.cost RS. 50,000) which can light up to 30 bulbs at a time. This can be new way to electrify the villages in future.
 6. Each MP/MLA has some project money which is not meant for planned development and can be used for projects in rural areas only. What can be done from here?
 7. We should try to teach the how Govt works, before we had study the Constitution our self ,Thanks to IIT we were taught.
 8. Government Officers should be called public Servants as mane will imply there work, serving rather than Ruling or controlling

* Educate in your own known village about how government mechanisms work. Draw govt. org. chart for their clear understanding. Encourage doing the things in writing and taking them with higher up whenever the need is there, but always put up a united front in order to get success.

* Cooperation and unity can do wonders. .

*Give your sympathetic ears to their problems by listening and spending sometime when you visit next time there. May be with your positive approach they can come to the some solutions to the problems, which are reachable.

*Encourage Positive Vs Negative attitude process of problem solving.

* Criticize less and spend more time to find an alternative solution. (Proactive)

* Tell them how to budget and keep account of their income and expense by themselves or with the help of their educated children.

* Pray for you're neighbor and country rather than only for yourself.

* Take help of NGO's or create one for your village.

* Schools cannot teach in a month what a field trip can teach in a day. Education should be related to local requirements

* Exchange visits from local to city schools -seeing is believing. Interaction of city and villages is necessary.

* Incentive in schools works better than the current punishment system.

?? Importance of social work should be taught from early childhood. Tons of spirituality has no value without social work at the back of it and tons of social work has no value without an ounce of spirituality.

??

?? Health and hygiene

??

?? Following points can be shared

??

Use less and less soap and toothpaste as they not only reduce natural skin oil but also pollute the atmosphere and water system.

Use of neem datun is best wherever it is available. We used it ourselves. The cheapest and best solution is a mixture of salt and baking soda in ratio of 2:1. This soda toothpaste is as we have here- but we pay an arm and a leg rather than its brand name Arm and Hammer.

Dependency on medicine should be minimized and use of Yoga should be encouraged to keep you healthy. We are doing this for last 5 years.

Kirya yoga Sansthan Jhansi Allahabad U.P. for self health improvement and god realization.(Yogi Stayam Ph.0532-667-243 WWW.kriyayoga-yogisatyam.org.)

There is one more system that is very popular in India; SIDH; system of self-cure. Its principle can be taught in villages. For more detail you can contact directly

Sidh Science research & Development Organization

S.No. 50/7 Mundhava Nagar , Wadgaonsheri-sheri Road

Pune 411014Maharastra telephone No. (020)6681900

· General and use of Solar power in villages:

1.people can use solar pumps for water and other solar equipment's like solar cooker and streetlights etc. Organization, which is meant for this purpose, is IREDA (Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency) India Habitat Center Lodi Road New Delhi -110003 contact Mr. Abhilakh Singh of Meerut UP phone no.011-4682113.

Advantages are 50% subsidy of installment costs up to 5 lakh rupees (i.e.2.5 lakh), 45% loan 12% interest on reducing balance effective is only 7%p.a.That means by putting only RS. 25000 of your own govt. will give the rest. And best part is life of such devices is 20 years now and no maintenance as well, a running cost for electric and diesel. These are now becoming popular as they are being made affordable.

2. The general principle of money management should be shared with them as well. Like you cannot become rich if you go on spending more than your income no matter who supports you. Either spend less or earn more. Keep account of expenses and income on a page per month for individual and collectively for village, in order to become richer.

3. A ceramic water filter, which is available in market for 40 RS, uses only two stainless steel pots. It can be even fitted into ghada (earthen pot), and costs less than \$1.

4. Prevention is better than cure. Water born decease can be prevented.

5. The other points of teaching cleanliness from the childhood. This takes care of environment around us by doing some social work.

?? Saving fuel and eating healthy food.

??

· 1. One meal should be non-cooked food like sprouted Dallas chain etc and eat with onion and tomato and spices, which we do for last five years can save up to half the cost of fuel. This not only saves fuel and time but is healthy also

· 2. The villagers who do not eat green vegetables should eat them every day, and fewer potatoes, in order to get all vitamins and minerals.

· 3. They should drink one less tea per day. Along with one gutka less per day, this will save at least 3 to 4 RS (saving idea).

Learn about alternate method of education from

SIDH (Society for Integrated Development Himalayas)

Puranpur, Landour Cantt. Mussoorie Uttranchal 248179.

Phone 0135-632-904,630-338;fax 0135-631-304, where they teach to do researc about village flora and fauna and history and geography of village and its traditions and festivals. And Shikshantar at Fatepur Udiapur Rajasthan is doing similar things. This type of education creates critical thinking and problem solving rather than alienating people from their roots.

If any body has any queries regarding the above article, please call us for more details.

*Here the address of Lucknow "schumaker institute of appropriate technology & rural development Village Malhaur PO chinhat UP 227105 India 91-522-2342267.

*Here is address of Solar cycle made in Poona Rest. 6000 cost Dr. Anil Rajvanshi Nimbicar Agricultural res. Inst. Phattan 415523 maharastra. With regards, and best wishes,

Truly yours,

Umesh Rashmi Rohatgi

24161 Nilan Drive Novi MI 48375-3754

Email- "Ruenterprise@aol.com"

248-471-5786