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The

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Week

MAN OF THE YEAR Dr Parameswara Rao

A Ph.D. in
nuclear science
from America.

He spurned

offers of lucrative jobs in India and
abroad 20 years ago to be a school-
master in his native village. And
today, he is the pioneer of a unique
method of village development—
creating bounty from waste.



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HE LETS NOTHING GO WASTE

A trust that has transformed life in over 50 villages



ONE evening in mid-1967, a strange meeting was coming to a close in a professor's chamber in Pennsylvania State University. There were just two persons in the room—the American professor and his young Indian research student whose dissertation on nuclear chemistry had been accepted by the university. Tears were rolling down the cheeks of the professor; the other man was as silent as a Buddha.

At long last the professor said: "In the 32 years of my career I have never come across such an original idea. I wish you good luck. The two shook hands and the young man rose to leave. At the door he heard the professor saying: "But remember Parameswara, the job here will remain open to you for two years. If ever you change your mind, take the next flight and come here. If it is after two years give me 15 days' notice. The young man replied: "I shall remember, sir. Thank you" and left.

But Parameswara, now Dr B.V. Parameswara Rao, forgot. He forgot about the offer of an associate professorship in Pennsylvania State University at a salary of \$2,500. He forgot about the jobs offered by two American companies at higher salaries. He forgot about the top job in India's Atomic Energy Establishment which he had left two and a half years earlier and which was waiting for him in Bombay.

On his flight back to India the next day, he remembered only one thing: the sight of two illiterate old men in his ancestral village of Dimli reciting the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata Purana*. Over the years the recollection of that childhood encounter was only growing stronger when his authoritarian father forbade him to go to the village, when he got married, when he applied for that job in Bombay thinking that he would not get it, when he said goodbye to Dr Brahm Prakash who asked him to come back to the Atomic Energy Establishment after getting a doctorate from the U.S.A. when his colleagues in the U.S.A. scoffed at his constant talk about the Indian villagers.

PICS: T. SANKAR

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infinite genius.

The mind that was in such trouble 20 years ago is at peace today. It has found its destiny in the little Dimli and its primitive neighbourhood. It seeks its joy from the fact that the primitiveness of the environment is rapidly giving way to a new village order one in which the most primitive of people prosper in harmony with the most primitive environment. It takes pride from the fact that the prosaically named Bhagavatula Chantable Trust is not a model but only a catalyst of change.

The Dimli neighbourhood today gives one a picture of constant activity. The vast acres of wasted bad lands on the rocky slopes of the Panchadharla Hills are now prospering into lush green farmlands. The dammed marshlands of Vakapadu, once ravaged by the tidal waves from the nearby Bay of Bengal, are now rich prawn-breeding and salt-producing areas. The ancient, but once moribund, lacquerware art of Etikoppaka village is now in the pangs of a reincarnation as a sophisticated handicraft. And above all, the once-starving bipeds in the 50-odd villages in Yellamanchili block of Visakhapatnam district are now looking forward to a better condition of living with better nutrition, with more income coming from their land and livestock, and with better health facilities provided by Parameswaragaru and his dedicated team of workers in the Bhagavatula Chantable Trust.

But achieving this has been no small task even for that American-trained scientist. First of all, there were a lot many things to unlearn—all those non-rural and even non-Indian values imposed on him by the urban culture. After all, how much of rural India did he know from those short summer vacations in his ancestral house at Dimli, having lived and studied in Visakhapatnam or Bombay or the United States?

And before that there was the problem of his father. He had always lacked the guts to defy him; that was why he had gone to college, instead of to the village, after school final. He had applied for the job in Bombay thinking that if rejected he could tell his father that he was unfit for such jobs. But the father had always won, and when Parameswara had written to him of the research project in America the father had difficulty in concealing his joy—the old man had replied by sending him an air ticket to the USA.

But this time the son had his way. On the very day of his return to Visakhapatnam he told his parents of his plans, though not yet concrete. He had already got the consent of his wife to whom he had written a four-page letter from the USA describing his dreams

The primitiveness of the environment is gradually giving way to a new village order...The trust is not a model but only a catalyst of change.

only to receive a four-lined letter which stated: 'Do whatever you like but always remember that I am with you.'

The father finally consented reluctantly. Within hours Parameswara Rao and his wife were cleaning the cobwebs in the abandoned ancestral house at Dimli, 50-odd kilometres from Visakhapatnam. The next day he went out for a walk in the village where he met a bunch of schoolboys. On inquiry he was told that their school was at Yellamanchili, five miles away.

So the first thing Dimli needed was a school. But where was money to start a



■ Keeping in touch. Dr Rao visiting a village

school? Parameswara began to talk to the villagers. But everyone was sceptical not only about the need for a school, but also about the genuineness of this strange man's purpose. At a meeting, Chilukama, the richest, and hence the most miserly, man in the village asked him: 'What is the guarantee that you won't run away with the money to America?' Parameswara replied calmly: 'My brothers are here to dissuade me from the project. Will you please talk to them?'

The brothers told Chilukama that Parameswara had come to Dimli refusing jobs which would pay him enough to start more

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than one school in a year. He wanted the people to contribute only because he wanted the school to be a people's school.

The next morning when Parameswara was having what he thought was the last meeting with the villagers at the Rama Mandir, Chilukamma walked in, took out a wad of notes from the fold of his dhoti, counted Rs 1,000 and gave it to Parameswara. The rest of the villagers did not want any more guarantee. That Chilukamma had trusted his money with this strange man was enough.

With Rs 37,000 collected this way and Rs 19,000 given by the American Peace Corps the school building was ready by June 1968. But then the state government suddenly withdrew permission to private parties to start schools.

Parameswara Rao met Chief Minister K. Brahmananda Reddy, but to no avail. He then sought an appointment with Governor Khandubhai Desai. After many failures he met the Governor's ADC who, amazed at the aspiring village schoolmaster's command over the English language, asked him: "Are you a graduate?" When Rao reluctantly told him that he was a Ph.D. from the USA, the ADC rushed into the Governor's room. The long meeting ended in the beginning of a close friendship. On Gandhi Jayanti day in 1968 the Dimli High School was opened. The school received ad hoc grants from the government to pay the staff till 1976 when it was handed over to the zilla parishad.

The courses taught to the children at the school included farming techniques. Parameswara was always conscious of the fact that mere literacy would not solve the village's problems. On the contrary, it would only

accentuate the problems with a large number of literate young men finding themselves misfits in the village milieu.

The village schoolmaster again began to look around. By then his two and a half years' savings from the USA were exhausted. It was then that he spotted the 1,000-odd acres of marshland at Vakapadu, 12 miles from Dimli. The cyclonic storms from the Bay of Bengal had left the area hospitable only to dangerous reptiles of the bog. The people on its periphery led a sub-human life, their few small-scale salt pans constantly destroyed by the tidal waves.

But that did not discourage him. Scientific methods of production should be able to withstand the onslaught of nature, he knew. If his experiments succeeded, he could impart the technology to the villagers.

Rao approached various government agencies with a request for a lease of 380 acres of wasteland at Vakapadu. After a long pursuit the papers were ready, but they were not just reaching him.

Once again he travelled to Hyderabad and tracked the papers down to a clerk's desk, where he was asked for a bribe of Rs 25. Showing his wallet which contained Rs 50, he told the clerk: "My return ticket will cost me Rs 25. I have to spend the night in Hyderabad. And moreover, why should I bribe you?"

The papers did not move from the table and Rao had to approach the chief minister. Fortunately, P.V. Narasimha Rao remembered the man whose school he had opened a few years earlier as education minister.

Salt production began at Vakapadu in 1973. In its early days, the neighbouring villagers used to laugh at the man who used to make

The Governor's ADC, amazed at the aspiring village schoolmaster's command of English, asked him: "Are you a graduate?" When Rao reluctantly told him that he was a Ph.D. from USA, the ADC rushed into the Governor's room. The long meeting Dr. Rao subsequently had with Governor Khandubhai Desai was the beginning of a long friendship.



■ Literally a sea change. From America left Dr Rao returned to his ancestral home (right)

the regular trips to Vakapadu, part of the way on his bicycle and part of the way carrying his bicycle across the bog. But the denision soon gave way to admiration when he showed them how useful even the boggiest land could be made. He also helped them take up salt manufacture as a worthy enterprise using modern technology. And recently he has also started experimenting with prawn culture in the reservoirs of his salt pans. See accompanying box.

Even before the Vakapadu project recovered from its teething problems, Parameswara began looking for other avenues of development. And in one he badly burnt his

He helped the villagers take up salt manufacture using modern technology. He also experimented with prawn culture in the salt reservoirs.

fingers because of his inexperience with local political powers. In 1973 he invited the local people to invest in a cooperative factory which would manufacture sugar from a drought-resistant variety of cane, thus helping the farmers of the area to grow this variety. But the local sugar lobby suddenly woke up realising that it would soon be deprived of the cheap raw material. Facing opposition Rao abandoned the project, and just as he had done to collect the money, he went from door to door to return it.

The incident, however, helped him in a way. Suddenly the local people's confidence in him grew and so Rao did not have to do

Bounty from waste

DHARMAVARAM Afforestation Ltd is perhaps the only private limited company formed in a village by the villagers. All its directors are women—five village women and two nominees of the BCT.

Three years ago the people of Gorrela Dharmavaram approached Dr Parameswara Rao with a problem: 170 of them owned 58 acres of wasteland. Could the BCT develop it for them?

Dr Rao calculated that it would take some years for

the land to be developed. Until then the trust would have to put in a great amount of money while the villagers would be getting nothing. Moreover, what is the guarantee that the land will not be fragmented later?

So he hit upon a novel plan. The plot-owners could form a private limited company, be financed by BCT and outside agencies like the Wasteland Development Board, and develop the land. The owners would be shareholders, one cent equalling

one share. While the land is being developed the owners may work there for wages.

In the first year the farm generated a revenue of Rs 12,000. The money was deposited in a cooperative account. A quarter of this was taken for further investment; another quarter for the development of the village; and the remaining half would be returned to the villagers after 15 years when the lease ends. Every year the amount would be distributed this way.

GORRELA Dharmavaram farm is just an example of the villagers' reaction to change through modern technology, when the results are shown to them. "There is no wasteland, but only wasted land," says Dr Rao. He is proving that through the Panchadhar and Haripuram farms.

The 50 acres of wasteland, leased from the government a few years ago near the Panchadhar temple, is today a prosperous farm. Hundreds of mango saplings, cashew, banana, coconut, papaya, teak, sesame and eucalyptus trees are growing there. The ca-



■ Wasteland development needs no alien technology. (Left) Subba Rao inspecting drip irrigation pot at Panchadhar.

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much time and effort to start the Duvula Cooperative Farmers Service Centre in 1974. The cooperative was launched to help farmers with agricultural loans, meet their equipment needs, provide them additional sources of income like poultry and dairy. Again money was the big problem. Finally he contacted a German organisation called EZE Central Protestant Agency for Development Assistance which asked him to form a trust. Once again Parameswara Rao went around the villages, but yet he was short of a few thousand rupees.

One day, his 78-year-old father called him and said: "I know you are doing some good work in the village. I will give you Rs 10,000 if

Said Rao's father: "I know nothing of what you are talking. But I have trust in you. Take the money and name the trust after the family."

you will start a hospital in Duvula and name it after me. I have 3,000 in cash and 7,000 in other assets to give you.

Parameswara replied, "Father, give me that 3,000. I shall develop the whole village and my scheme will include the health of the villagers without actually having to start a hospital. A hospital will require much more money than what you can give me. The next morning the father again called him to his side and said: "I know nothing of what you are talking. But I have trust in you. Take the money and name the trust after the family."

The Bhagavatula Charitable Trust (BCT) was registered in November 1976 and it had its

shew has started yielding—Rs 1,50,000 from it last year.

Wasteland development needs no alien technology, but only appropriate technology, say the farming experts of BCT. Explained T.V. Raghava Rao, superintendent of Gorrela Duvula Varan farm: "First we wait for the rains. The stones and there are far too many of them are removed from the moist soil. This is only the first stage, but we don't lay the land waste until further development. We grow horsegram or something like that which will contribute to the fertility of the soil while generating some little

income. Then we treat the land further with fertilisers and begin full farming. For water we dig borewells and use drip irrigation, the method in which a pot of water with a small hole is kept under each plant."

The seeds are made of the stones collected from the farms. They also soil with coconut trees and grow in them. When the soil is found to be good for growing trees, pits are dug and filled with fertile soils brought from elsewhere. Fodder can be grown in the midst of these plots.

But is this method of wasteland development afford-

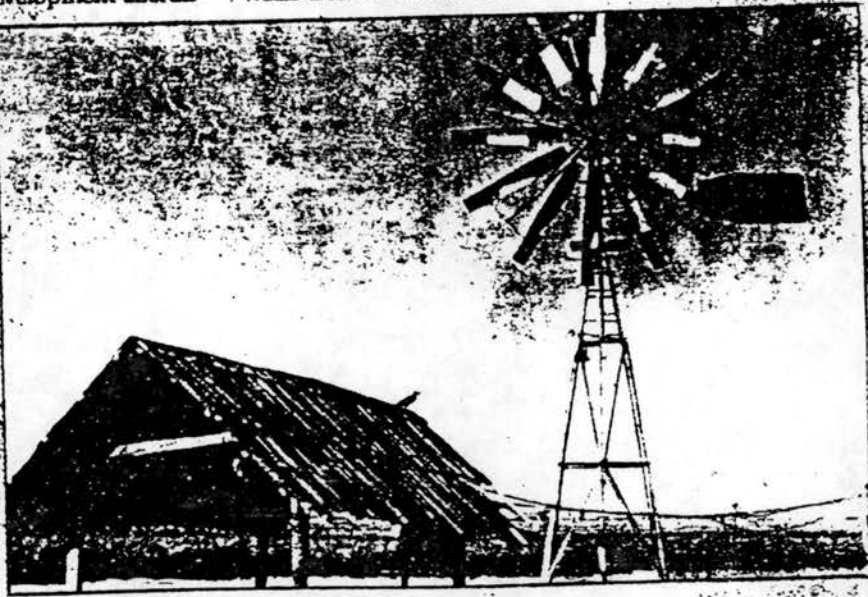
able to small farmers? "Very much," answered Subbas Rao, superintendent of Pachadharia farm. "While developing our farms we are also telling the villagers how they can repeat the same in their plots at small costs. Anyone can start with growing trees in the most inhospitable land, once started the drip irrigation for the trees is quite cheap."

THE Vakapadu experiment is much more than marshland development. It is perhaps the first integrated salt and prawn project in the country. Here the water from the sea is drawn

into large reservoirs where prawns are grown. In summer the water is drawn into the salt pans where the prawns are left to dry.

While generally the income is good, the BCT has also been able to provide the villagers with a variety of services. Loans are given to the villagers to help them in their development. The idea is to help the villagers to develop their own farms and to provide them with the necessary training.

—R. PRASADHAN



(middle) carrying water to the farms; (right) windmills draw water for salt-pans

lakh = 100,000

Pancha = 5

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first experience of relief and rehabilitation work following the 1977 cyclone disaster in coastal Andhra. The trust put in eight lakh mandays to bring relief to the people. In the event 6,000 people benefited from it.

Then began the ambitious wasteland development schemes. I noticed that 25,000 acres lay waste in this block Yellamanchili. Why not develop it?" said Parameswara Rao. So he contacted the district collector who finally sanctioned 50 acres on a 20-year lease on the slopes of the Panchadharia Hills with a warning: "You are being foolish."

From any reckoning it was a foolish attempt. Buried in the land were huge

The land had not been touched with a plough or spade for centuries. But Rao only saw the rose among the barrenness. He spotted the springs of water on the hills.

boulders. The land had never been touched with a plough or a spade for hundreds of centuries. In short a primeval land, greened only by thorny shrubs and weeds.

But Rao only saw the rose among the thorns. On the rocky slope of the hill was a centuries-old temple around which were five perennial springs. The Panchadharia Hills had got their name from these springs. So there was water—and hope.

The work began immediately with hired experts. "We went to the agricultural laboratories and collected information about plant species that grow on dry land. We did nothing original. We were only implementing what

Village run by women

If you had gone to Marripalem village 10 years ago, you would not have seen the women. If you go to Marripalem today, you may not see the men.

Ten years ago when Dr Parameswara Rao visited the flood-affected village, he was told that the men did not allow their women to venture out of their homes. Some of them even locked up their women when they went out to work. The men did every outdoor work, including fetching water. When the women travelled, the bullock-carts were heavily curtained.

"If you visit the village again tomorrow after 10 o'clock, when the men are away in the fields, you may meet some of the women," someone told Dr Rao. The next day he met a few women who almost whispered to him their plight.

Rao knew that merely talking to the men would do no good. The first and most harmless step should be something that the men did not resent. He could give them *adda* leaves to stitch. The nearby Kothakotta village could supply the leaves which the women could stitch within the cloisters of their home and the trust

could market the finished eating plates. The men would not resent their women sitting at home and supplementing the family income.

Two trainers from Kothakotta taught 30 Marripalem women how to stitch the leaves. Now the women found that they could save a little money. They had heard of the thrift scheme implemented in the neighbouring villages. So a mahila mandali of 150 women was started in Marripalem, which in the very first year saved Rs 3,000 through the thrift scheme. The Mahila Samakya, the federation of mahila mandalis, lent Rs 9,000 to the mandali members to buy poultry and sheep and for agricultural purposes.

Then started the nursery raising programme. In a couple of years the village women saved Rs 4,000. They took Rs 600 from this joint fund and collected another Rs 600 from contributions

and built a road to the main road.

One day the women suggested to Dr Rao that they would like to start salt manufacture. Marripalem is close to the BCT's salt pans at Vakapadu and many of Marripalem men were salt workers. Some were involved in salt production with the help of banks and the BCT. But men were men and they used to overborrow and spend the money drinking. Production was falling.

At Dr Rao's suggestion, nine women formed a Salt Production and Marketing Centre and took complete charge of Marripalem's salt production and marketing. They employed their men as labourers. But the men still continued to cheat in the diesel they bought for their oil engines and so on. The women arranged with a petroleum dealer to supply fuel only against the written requests by the mahila man-

dali. Needless to say, salt manufacture became a profitable business at Marripalem.

By now the women were virtually running the affairs of the village, though almost all of them were illiterate. One day, Veerayamma, the Harijan woman who is the most active of them all, was distressed to hear a few men scoffing at them: "You may run all these but you have to come to us for keeping accounts."

The mahila mandali met immediately and contacted the trust which sent them a teacher. Today, the women do the accounting themselves—at the salt society at the mahila mandali and at the ration shop they run.

The women's ration shop at Marripalem was started four years ago in the house of Veerayamma. Varahamma is the honorary accountant. The shop was started when the women found that the shop in the nearby village (11 km away) from where they were buying their grains was cheating them in quantity.

The Marripalem women have brought light to their village, literally. The power supply to the village's street lamps was cut by the power board three years ago when the panchayat defaulted on payment. Last year the mahila mandali members approached the panchayat

Marripalem women were once locked up in their houses. Today they virtually rule the village. They run a ration shop; they have brought back power supply to the village; they have solved their men's drinking problem.

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the agricultural universities found was possible. See box on page 14.

I guess I was being foolish, was the remark of the collector who sanctioned the lease when he visited the prosperous Panchadharia farm three years later. One can say there are today six springs on Panchadharia Hills. The five springs of water and the spring of hope that is the BCT whose activities are coordinated from there.

But mere wasteland development does not benefit the villages except that it provides them employment. Rao is always particular that the technology has to be taken to the villagers. That is why the BCT has taken small

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Meanwhile, Parameswararao was also understanding the life of the villagers. His contact with the farmers and salt workers made him realise that development work oriented merely towards economic uplift was meaningless. One evening as he was walking to Morakada village, an old woman stopped him and said: You have all these programmes for men, who squander them. They rarely benefit

which pleaded that it had no money. The women then decided that each family (each woman) would contribute Rs 10 to the power fund. Three women went to the Anakapalli electricity board office with Rs 1,500. But the bill was for Rs 2,200.

When they came back to the village, the men offered to help. But the women did not want to be obliged forever to their men for such a paltry amount. They decided they would collect Rs 3 more from each house-

hold. They went to the power board office in early January 1987, this time with Rs 100 short.

The engineer was surprised to see the delegation of women and inquired what "the ladies" were doing there. ("This was how we learnt the word 'ladies'," Veerayamma told this correspondent). When he heard their story, he contributed Rs 100 from his pocket. Power supply was restored the same day.

Marripalem women have

also solved their men's drinking problem. One day they just walked into the liquor shop in the village, broke the bottles and warned the shopkeeper: "Earn your bread by doing something more decent." They also paid him for the destroyed ware.

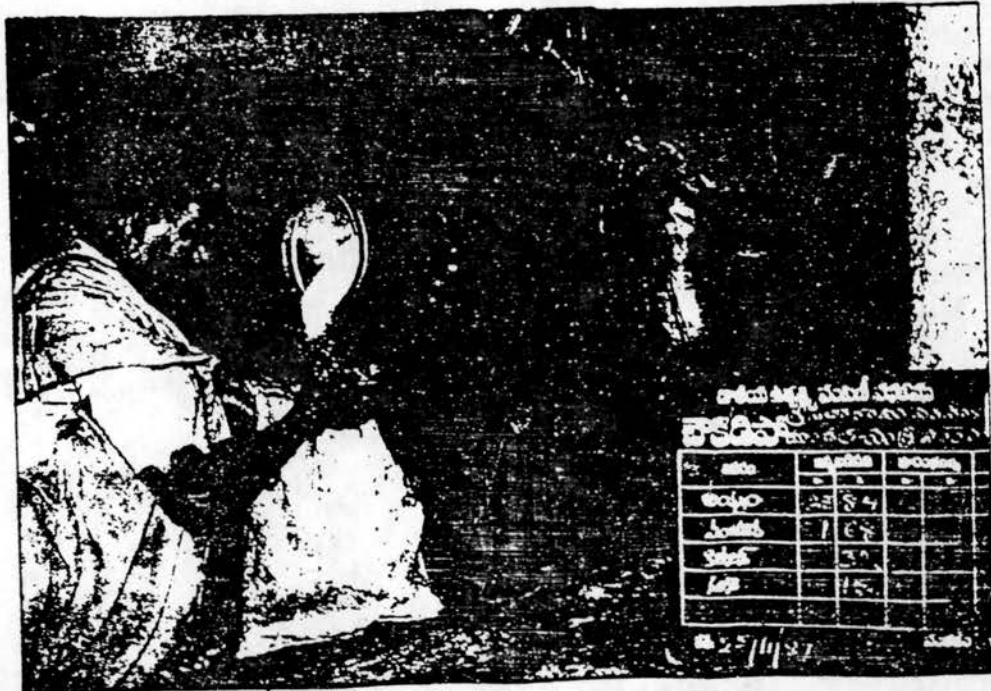
Veerayamma narrated how they transferred a delinquent master in the single-teacher school in the village. "When we found that he was rarely coming to school and not teaching our children properly, we warned him. He

laughed at us saying the mahila mandali could do nothing to him as he was appointed by the government. When the school inspector came, we could not meet him. Later some of our members had a chance meeting with him at the bank where they told him about the schoolmaster. The inspector then came on a surprise inspection and found that the master was not discharging his duties properly. He was soon transferred. The present master is all right."

Marripalem today is perhaps the most prosperous of all villages in the neighbourhood. The men seem to have accepted the fact that their women are cleverer than they and are now cooperative. Earlier they used to beat their women for taking part in the mahila mandali meetings; today they eagerly look forward to each meeting which would come out with new plans for the development of the village and their own well-being.

The village today has 10 biogas plants. The health of the villagers is closely monitored by the trust's health workers. Most of the children are going to school or to the balawadi. The women have been careful that when they prospered, their village also prospered.

—R. PRASANNAN



■ Where women run the show. The ration shop at Marripalem

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women and the family. Don't you have anything for us?

Thus was started the thrift schemes for women, the mahila mandalis in villages, whose activities are coordinated by the Mahila Samakhyas, a federation of mahila mandalis. The programme began by giving women additional sources of small income like raising nurseries and stitching adda leaves. The women were encouraged to save small amounts against which the trust would give them loans to buy sheep and poultry and so on. The activities of mahila mandalis have become so successful that BCT is now concentrating on women as agents of social

It is Dr Rao's infinite capacity to use his patient reasoning that has won him the goodwill of the villagers.

change.

We have come to realise that when we work through the men, the benefits rarely permeate to the family. A man's world is mostly limited to him and perhaps to his farm or work," says Dr Rao. "But a woman's world extends to her family, that is herself, her husband and children. Through them the village also develops. You can see the result for yourself."

There is no denying the fact that it was through the women that BCT's development message has reached the 50-odd villages around it. Women health workers educate the villagers about basic sanitation and attend to

The value of thrift

KASULAMMA of Gokiwada village was leading a hand-to-mouth existence until a few months ago when she approached the mahila mandali and got a loan of Rs 1,000 to buy a few sheep and sell jaggery. She sat by the roadside and sold her wool to the farm workers returning from fields. Instead of money she accepted sugarcane from them which she sent to the jaggery mill in bulk. With that she again bought flour, made more jantikas, collected more canes, got more jaggery. Today she claims to have a saving of Rs 1,100.

Kasulamma has repaid her loan and can look forward to a loan of Rs 1,000 and buy a few sheep or goats which she can fatten and sell at a profit. In a few years, she would be making a few thousands.

And all the while she need not worry about the health of her sheep. The village para-vets of BCT will be there to advise her. And she can always take her animals to the veterinarians in Haripuram farm.

BCT enters a village through thrift. The women in the villages are encouraged to save small amounts by

raising saplings and selling them to BCT or by stitching adda leaves (used as eating plates which BCT sells to the Tirupati, Simhachalam and Annavaram temples and also to local people for marriage feasts). The savings are collected by thrift workers.

Each village has a mahila mandali, whose activities are coordinated by a Mahila Samakhyas. Started with 215 members in 1981, the thrift scheme now encompasses

nearly 2,000 women who are expected to save at least a rupee a week. The BCT's development message has reached the villages through the thrift scheme. The BCT's development message has reached the villages through the thrift scheme. The BCT's development message has reached the villages through the thrift scheme.



■ Health care. Dr Suryanarayana examining a patient

your savings. No one from the banks comes to motivate you to save. And most often they do not give loans without any security. If due cattle dies, you lose the money.

BCT's health scheme also operates through the women. The BCT's health scheme also operates through the women. The BCT's health scheme also operates through the women.

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A small hospital with in-patient facility is coming up at Haripuram farm. There will be a day room. The scheme also runs an ambulance service. It may be noted that none of the villages covered by BCT has a primary health centre, not to talk of a hospital.

—R. PRASANNAN

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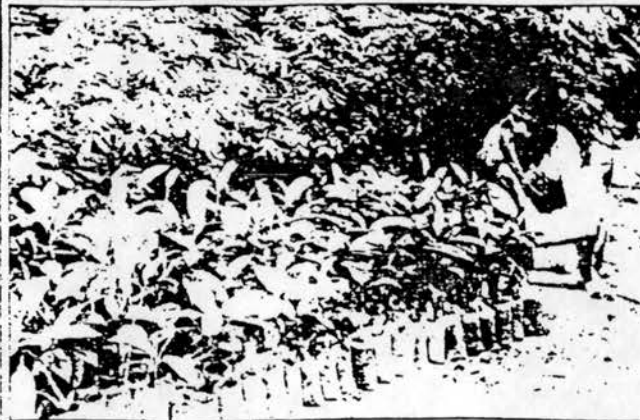
primary medical needs, women para-vets attend to the health problems of village livestock, women thrift workers collect the savings of village women and educate them about small savings and investment schemes like poultry and sheep, the mahila mandalis run the balawadis and supervise thrift activities—in every field it is the women who are in the forefront. (See box on page 18.)

There is no gainsaying the amount of risk that Dr Rao and his colleagues in the BCT have faced in such schemes which involve a certain amount of interference with age-old familial and social equations. In earlier stages the villagers quite often protested when Harijan women were appointed as balawadi teachers or health workers. Dr Rao narrated an instance: "Once one of our villages wanted to have a balwadi. We selected a Harijan destitute girl of the village, trained her and sent her to the village as teacher. The villagers came back to us saying they did not want a Harijan to teach their children. Then we asked them: Didn't you ask for the balwadi? Didn't you say that you wanted this poor girl to be helped in some way or the other? They said, yes. Then

An old woman asked him: "You have all these programmes for men who squander them. Don't you have anything for us?" Since then BCT's development message has reached the 50-odd villages around it through the women. In every field it is the women who are in the forefront.

we told them. We can find only this one way to meet both demands. Do you have any complaints against her teaching qualities? They said they had none. We then told them to go back and ponder the matter. Your children will come to no harm by being taught by a Harijan girl. The next day they came back saying that the teacher was welcome.

It is this infinite capacity of Dr Rao to use his patient reasoning that has won him the goodwill of the villagers. He has often used it to correct their erring ways. Once 120 people of one village were sanctioned loans by a bank to buy cows at the recommendation of the trust. Most of them got the money but did not buy the cows. When the bank complained to Dr Rao, he and a few colleagues visited the village where some of the workers enacted a role-play which showed what had happened in the village. Some people shouted: "Yes, this has happened in the village." The clamour was such that the erring loanees came to Dr Rao and admitted of their mistake. He told them softly: "Now you go and buy your cows. Not one among the 120 failed to comply with that friendly advice."



■ Many sources of income. Clockwise from left: stitching adia leaves; tending goats; raising saplings

MAN OF THE YEAR ■ DR PARAMESWARA RAO

Though a low-profile and soft-spoken man, Dr Rao's pioneering work in wasteland development has been noticed by the high and mighty. In 1981 a team of World Bank experts led by its then chairman Robert McNamara visited Delhi. One of the visitors who had heard of Dr Rao through an international funding agency asked Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi about him, who in turn asked Narasimha Rao to find out about the man and get him to lunch with her and the World Bank officials the next day. Narasimha Rao contacted the state government and the district administration which finally spotted him in a remote village from where he was virtually put into the next train to Hyderabad and the next flight to Delhi. He was a few minutes late for the lunch.

From then on Mrs Gandhi had shown a keen interest in the activities of BCT. However, Rao does not seem to be happy to share the glory of the trust. "It is the villagers who are developing themselves. The BCT is only streamlining their work. And in the BCT it is my colleagues who are doing the actual work. I am just a head clerk," he says.

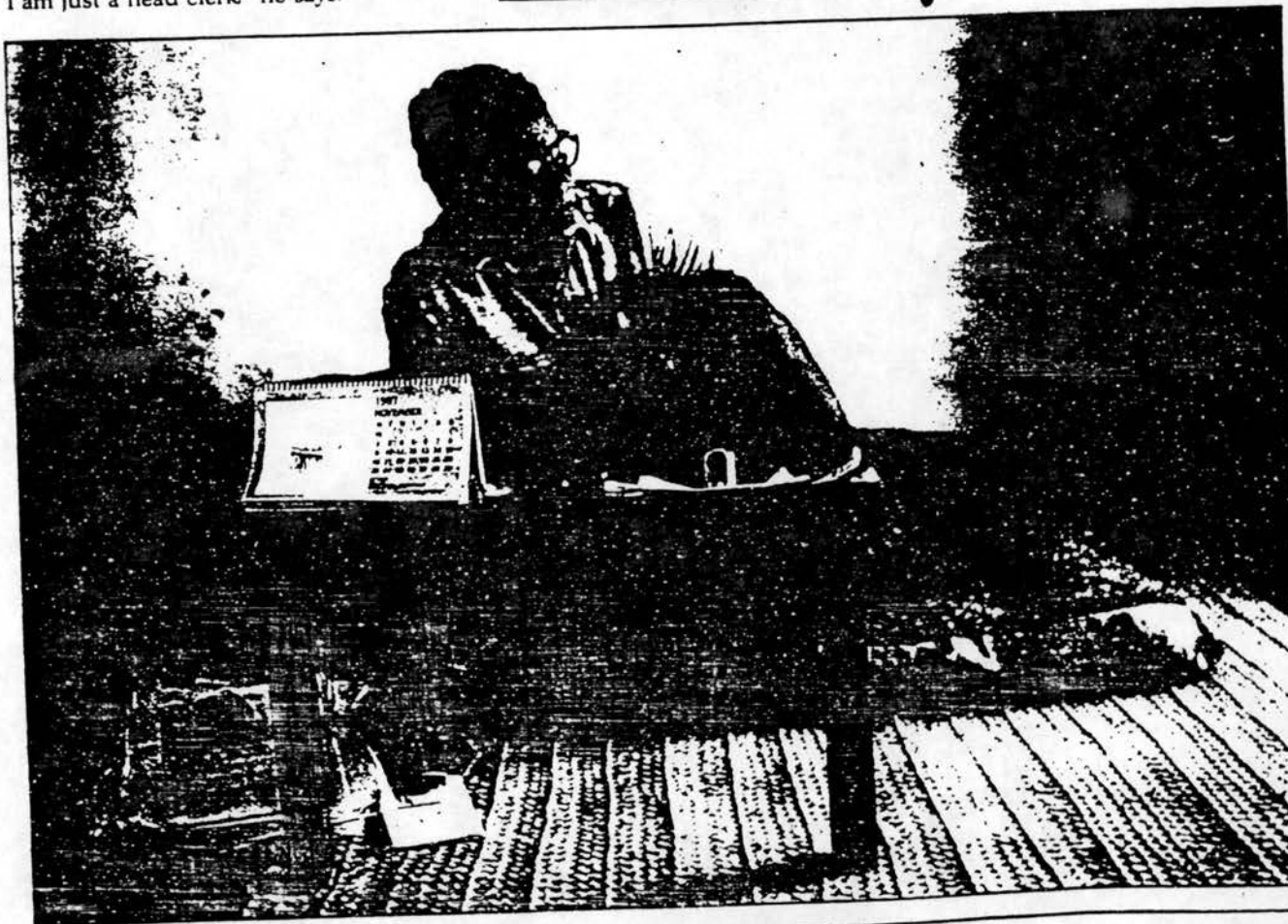
A World Bank official told Mrs Indira Gandhi about Dr Rao's work and she asked Narasimha Rao to get him to lunch with her the next day. Rao contacted the state administration which finally spotted Dr Rao in a remote village from where he was literally airlifted to Delhi. He was a few minutes late for the lunch.

The man's aversion to personality cult is there for all to see. He rarely interferes with the work of his colleagues. He is particular that the villagers should not credit their prosperity to him. "It is their genius that is working. They are finding solutions to their own problems," he insists.

Perhaps it is this inherent shyness that has kept honours and awards away from him. But that in no way undermines the pioneering greatness of the work of Parameswara Rao. A casual visitor to the region may even fail to spot anything concrete in the villages where BCT activities are going on. But if he asks around, he may learn that some of these villages have got drinking water from the borewells dug by BCT, that there is no one starving there, that they get plenty of medical attention from the trust's doctors and the village health workers, that all of them have been freed from bondage to perennial poverty and fruitless labour, that most of them have enough to eat and more to save.

Isn't that an Indian villager's dream?

—R. PRASANNAN and
G.S. RADHA KRISHNA



LET US LIGHT THE L-A-M-P OF DIWALI

Do You Know

- That the overall literacy rate in India today is only 36% after 40 years of independence and spending Rs. 3000 crores a year on Education.
- That countries like Vietnam, Burma, Tanzania, Somali, Brazil, Cuba and China have achieved 100% literacy in a short time.
- That by the year 2000 A.D every second illiterate in the world will be an Indian.

India, a country which could produce Bhagvad Gita when elsewhere people could not even read and write is now a "developing" country.

LAMP is Literacy As a Movement of People, targets to make 288 Million people literate by the year 1991.

We Can

- Devote an hour every week on LAMP
- Let others know about LAMP in India and abroad
- Save 25 cents a day for LAMP
- Raise funds for LAMP
- Volunteer with some of the social organisations in India for LAMP for a few months.

INDIA LITERACY PROJECT 1990

After working in the villages of India over two decades, men and women of voluntary agencies have realized that illiteracy is one of the main handicaps for the development of those denied the opportunities in life.

We mean to utilize the talents and enthusiasm of high school boys and girls and other educated youth who will teach illiterate children and adults, especially women, in their village homes. This has been done in smaller developing countries with remarkable success. To prove this is feasible on a mass scale in a country like India, we are proposing a pilot-program to teach one million illiterates in the International Literacy year 1990. This will further prove it is possible for the poor to raise themselves from the syndrome of poverty through literacy. The cost of the total project is \$10 million out of which \$3 million comes from the community. We are approaching various international sources for the remaining support.

As their commitment, the Indians in the USA are raising \$100,000 before Dec. 31, 1989. Dr. Ramesh Bellamkonda, Mansfield, Ohio, has donated \$10,000, while Dr. Sadasiva Reddy, Jackson, Michigan; Mr. B. Venkateswara Rao, Detroit and Mrs. Indira Kolli, Suffern, N.Y. have donated \$1,000 each. Would you like to join this crusade?

B. V. Parameswara Rao,

Executive Director, Bhagavatula Charitable Trust
Yellamanchili, Andhra Pradesh, India 531055

INDIA LITERACY PROJECT 1990

NEEDS ANALYSIS

- i. The single greatest natural resource of a developing country is the educational level of its work force. The lack of basic literacy skills is thus the most significant deterrent to the development of that country.
- ii. The overall literacy rate in India is 36%, and the literacy rate among women is only 20%
- iii. Two-thirds of the children of school-going age in India are unable to go to school: either the schools do not exist or they lack the financial resources to attend school. In many instances, the education of one child in a family is accomplished at the expense of the educational opportunities of younger brothers and sisters, who are sent out to work daily in order to support the one child who attends school.

PROPOSAL MISSION STATEMENT

1990 is International Literacy Year. In celebration of this theme, the India Literacy Project proposes to target one million individuals, especially women and school-age children who lack the ability to attend school, and provide them basic skills training to be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic. This goal will be accomplished by students and youth volunteers who will be provided training, and will in turn teach literacy skills to individuals in their own communities and villages.

This project is a pilot, and in the initial stage will be implemented in one state in India. However, it is important to recognize that the project aims not only at educating one million people, but also at educating officials at national, state and local levels or government to demonstrate that with a small investment of money and with coordination of effort, a great deal may be accomplished. It is hoped that this pilot will be the model for implementation of similar expanded projects country-wide.

PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATIONAL STRUCTURE

1. Bhagavatula Charitable Trust (BCT) will take responsibility for providing the organizational structure to implement, supervise and monitor the project.
2. High School graduates and other educated individuals in the villages will be identified to be the Instructors for the project. They will be provided training and on-going supervision (detailed later in this report) to support them in their efforts. The Instructors will form a *Corps of India Volunteers*. They will not be paid for their instructional efforts, because it is felt that this direct instructional

India Literacy Project 1990

experience will enhance their own educational skills ... *to teach is to learn twice...* and will also instill in the educated youth, through service in their own communities, an early sense of direction for their later lives.

3. The target population will be individuals in the communities and villages of these Instructors who are illiterate. Priority will be given to women and non-school attending children of school age.
4. BCT will work to identify *Rural Motivators* within an area. The *Rural Motivators* are people who will serve as the local managers for the project. They will identify within each village, high school educated youth and students who will have the ability to be trained as Instructors. Each *Rural Motivator* will have the responsibility for five area villages and will be paid an allowance of Rs. 500.00 per month for a duration of one year, for their efforts on this project. They will also be provided with bicycles, if necessary, in order that they can have transportation to outlying villages under their supervision.

It is hoped, as additional benefit of this project, that these *Rural Motivators*, through their experience with the management of this project, will acquire additional marketable skills themselves, which will enhance their future employment.

5. BCT will identify motivated teachers in the community to serve as *Monitors*. These *Monitors* will supervise and guide groups of *Rural Motivators*.
6. BCT in collaboration with other organizations such as local Colleges and Universities, will identify qualified professionals who will serve as *Supervisors, Co-ordinators and Manager* for the project. These professionals will be provided training and support, initially through the services of BCT in the overall management of the project. They will be paid by **Project Literacy**, which will additionally provide mopeds, motorbikes, and jeeps for the transportation of these personnel for the supervision and monitoring of the project.
7. BCT will set up local committees, preferably one in each village, to encourage and foster larger participation of the villagers themselves in the project. It is hoped that these local committees will support the development of a supportive context for the project within the village by organizing such efforts as graduation ceremonies for the newly literate students and their Instructors, show due recognition for the efforts of this volunteers corps.
8. Currently, the Government of India, through its National Literacy Mission, is operating various State Resource Centers to research and produce appropriate reading materials and follow-up books for its literacy program. These materials will be the contribution of the Indian Government to this project.

India Literacy Project 1990

OPERATING STRUCTURE

20 *Instructors* per village, each teaching up to 5 students 100 learners

5 Villages

One *Rural Motivator* 500 learners

6 *Rural Motivators*

One *Monitor* ...(Covering the area of one mandal) 3000 learners

3 *Monitors*

One *Supervisor* ... (covering the area of one taluk)..... 10,000 learners

10 *Supervisors*

One *Co-ordinator* ...(covers the area of one district) 100,000 learners

10 *Co-ordinators*

One *Manager* 1,000,000 learners

PAST EXPERIENCE

During January 1988, BCT ran a program where it identified several *Rural Motivators* and trained them in leadership, organizational and management skills, for a period of three weeks. In addition, they were exposed to presentations and materials that explored the conditions under which poverty is maintained, and a variety of ways in which motivated people can take initiative in eradicating the causes of poverty in their own lives and in the lives of others in environment. These trained *Rural Motivators* have since gone back to their villages and have become the focal points of a variety of on-going projects.

In this present project, these *Rural Motivators* will be further trained in the context of this literacy program, and will be the individuals who will identify and provide support and encouragement for the educated students and youth who will be the *Instructors* in this program. They (the *Rural Motivators*) will encourage the *Instructors* to carry out the instructional programs in their own homes to facilitate the access of all participants in the literacy program. In other word, it is these *Rural Motivators* who will sustain the enthusiasm and tempo of the program, encourage participation, and provide the basic supportive framework for the on-going program. It is important to recognize here that in every village, in every area, there are to be found a group of individuals

India Literacy Project 1990

who have innate leadership skills, who are capable of commanding the respect of their constituents, and providing the momentum for a project that will develop the skills of their peoples. They simply need a context within which these innate skills can flourish, and this project intends to facilitate the development of such people, in an effort to awaken and train the leaders for the next generation.

BUDGET

The target population for **Project Literacy** per mandal is 3,000 individuals. As will be shown below, the training costs per individual learner is \$1.30

<i>Support of Rural Motivators</i>		
Initial one month training	Rs. 1,500.00	
Living allowance for duration of project	6,000.00	
Transportation allowance	1,000.00	
Sub-total		Rs. 8,500.00
Supervisory costs (per six Motivators)	Rs. 5,100.00	
Support and materials (per six Motivators)	5,610.00	
Total cost for six Rural Motivators		Rs. 61,710.00
Approximate total cost per mandal (in dollars)		\$ 3,900.00
The training costs per individual learner (\$3,900 divided by 3000 is \$1.30)		\$1.30
<i>Other support costs per individual learner</i>		
Books and writing materials	\$3.00	
Supervision charges (15%)	0.65	
Equipment, supplies and rent for office space	1.00	
Evaluation and assessment cost	1.00	
Sub-total of project costs per learner		\$6.95
<i>Cost Sharing Breakdown per Individual Learner</i>		
Donor Agency	69.5%	\$6.95
In-kind contribution of volunteer corps	20.0%	2.00
Government contribution (books and material)	10.5%	1.05
Total Cost of Literacy per Individual learner		\$10.00

Funding Requested from Donor Agency

Total target learner population (individuals) for Project Literacy	1 million
Donor Agency Contribution	\$6.95 million
Volunteer Corps Contribution (in-kind)	\$2.00 million
Government Contribution (in-kind - books and materials)	\$1.05 million
Total Cost for Project Literacy	\$10.00 million
<i>Funding Requested from Donor Agency</i>	<i>\$6.95 million</i>

ANTICIPATED PROJECT OUTCOMES

It is hoped that

1. by the end of the year 1990, one million learners will become literate.
2. this project will be the model for the institution of literacy programs nationwide, on an expanded scale, so that within 5 years, India may arrive at the goal of 100% literacy across the nation.
3. the success of this project will focus nation-wide attention to the issue of literacy. Hopefully, the success of this project will be instrumental in changing the priorities of the national budget and channel more resources into the effort toward 100% national literacy.
4. national, state and local government agencies will recognize that with focussed attention, integrated effort that utilizes and supports leadership at the community level, and with the infusion of relatively small financial resources, nation-wide literacy *can* be accomplished.

PROJECT EVALUATION

Definition of Literacy

- The Indian Government defines literacy as the ability to read and comprehend a newspaper.
- The reading rate is defined as 40 words per minute.
- Writing literacy is defined as the ability to take directions from a normal text (such as a newspaper) at the rate of 20 words per minute.
- Computational skills are assessed by the ability to add and subtract two digit sequences.

India Literacy Project 1990

The resource and support materials developed by the Indian Government are based on these definitions, and these materials will be utilized by **Project Literacy**. Therefore, **project Literacy** will take this definition of literacy in basic skills as its minimum goals over a 12 month period.

Assessment of Learner Progress

The evaluation of the progress of the learners will take place at three points in the program:

- One after six months of the initiation of the project,
- one after ten months, and
- there will be a final evaluation to ensure that all learners have attained literacy as defined above.

This intermediate assessment at ten months will be conducted informally, to ensure that all learners are on the appropriate learning trajectory to reach the criteria defined above, and to ensure additional attention and resources for those individuals who may be progressing at a slower rate than others.

Monitoring of Overall Project Implementation

The *Project Manager* will be in charge of the overall program implementation. With the assistance of the BCT staff, he/she will develop a set of project implementation time-limes, and will communicate these dates to the project personnel, to the appropriate funding agency/personnel, and to the Government officials. He/She will be expected to generate quarterly reports that will document the progress in the identification and training of project staff and will also incorporate the results of the learner assessments into the quarterly report.

BCT will be the fiscal designee for the entire project, and will take the responsibility of overseeing project expenditures over the duration of the program.

CONTACT ADDRESS FOR PROJECT LITERACY in INDIA

Dr. B. V. Parameswara Rao, Director
Bhagavatula Charitable Trust
Yellamanchili
Visakhapatnam District 531 055
India
Phone 011 91 891 63994/60443

India Literacy Project 1990

CONTACT ADDRESSES FOR PROJECT LITERACY in USA

Dr. Dev Ratnam
President
Polymag, Inc.
685 Station Road
Bellport, NY 11713
516-286-4111 (Off)
516-271-8173 (Res)

Dr. Runi Mukherji, Director
Health Careers Opportunity Program
Natural Sciences Building S222
SUNY at Old Westbury
Old Westbury, NY 11568-0210
516-876-2737 (Off)
516-271-8173 (Res)

Dr. Murthy P. Bhavaraju
1061 Vail road
Parsippany
New Jersey 07054
201-334-4586

Minnesota Contact:
Dr. K. P. S. Menon
1227 Adams St. N.E.
Minneapolis, MN, 55413
612-379-1886 (Res)

ACTION PLAN IN USA

1. As their committment to this cause, the Indians in the US are raising \$100,000 before December 31, 1989.
2. If you feel like joining the crusade, please make your check payable to one of the following **tax-exempt** organisations, appending **:LAMP 1990** after the name. They have agreed to send 100% of the money to the project in India. India Abroad Foundation also periodically publishes names and amounts of the donors.
 - (CT, Hartford) Volunteers in Service to Education in India.
 - (IL, Chicago) I.D.S.
 - (MI, Detroit) TANA Foundation
 - (NY, New York) India Abroad Foundation
 - or any other tax-exempt organisation you have contact with, IF they will send 100% of the money to the project in India AND when approved and placed on this Ok'ed list in the future.
3. Please mark the memo on your check with '**MN Drive**', or the appropriate 2-character designation of your state in place of '**MN**'. For Canada use '**CN**'.
4. Please mail your check to:
 - Dr. Runi Mukherji, 11 Upper Drive, Huntington Bay, NY, 11743.

- "By the year 2000 A.D every second illiterate in the world will be an Indian".

Concerned? Then

Meet Dr. Rao

- "in 1967, the day after receiving a Ph.D. in Nuclear Chemistry, with excellent job offers in the U.S., he returned to his native village in India, to work with the people".

- meet a man who has served **selflessly** for 22 years in the villages of India
- who helped to **build schools** that run well
- who helped to turn "wasteland" into crop-yielding **bounty** for villagers
- who helped sequestered and suppressed **women** establish and run industries
- who came to Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi's** attention in 1981 only when a World Bank official casually mentioned him
- whose methods **inspired** many similar groups in Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh
- and much more.

Today he seeks to **double** the dismal Indian literacy rate of 36% by census day 1991 by having a mass movement of the people. That means he must reach **288 million** people. This project is called LAMP for "Literacy as a movement of people".

Impossible you think and say.

Come listen to him. He has so many interesting ideas and experiences to share with us.

U of M

(East Bank)

Parking: ramp behind, near river

Access: East River Road thru

Dinkytown

Tel.: 625-4177

Date: Sep/26

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Place: Women's Lounge

COFFMAN STUDENTS UNION

(seats 150)

There is also a 12:15 p.m. meeting, at the same date and building. There are other day and evening meetings, Sep/25 - 26. Also on Sep/25, 8:00 - 9:30 p.m., at HINDU MANDIR, 1835 Polk St. N.E., Minneapolis, 1 block east off Central Ave, open community meeting. LAMP: Minneapolis contact: K. P. S. Menon, 612/379-1886. Sponsored by India Club and the Indo-American Association.

K. P. S. Menon
1227 Adams St. N.E.
Minneapolis. MN, 55413
Tel.: 612/379-1886

1989/Sep/07

Dear Friends,

The attached documents say a lot more and say it better than I could describe in a letter to you. Please read them to see if we can help on the matters below.

Dr. Parameswara Rao will visit Minneapolis - St. Paul from Sep/25 ^{Mon} ~~Sat~~ day night thru ~~Oct/03~~ ^{Sep 26}.

- 1) The attached documents are being sent to a few of you as community leaders or friends in the hope you will carry this message to the rest of the community.
- 2) If any of you can host an evening gathering or take him around during parts of the day, please let me know.
- 3) Meeting with 10 people is just fine. Addressing 500 is fine too. He is in fact arriving from Washington D.C., after just such an address to the World Bank.
- 4) Some thoughts and suggestions on groups that might enjoy meeting him, groups whose members might be inspired by his message include:
 - Church mass
 - Rotary clubs, etc
 - India associations
 - Large or small company groups
 - University of MN, colleges
 - Gandhi birthday celebration, Oct/2
 - Literacy or New Wave groups
- 5) Look at the section on 'Challenge to Youth'. Even your children can have a life-altering and uplifting experience in India.
- 6) He has so many inspiring ideas, you have to hear them to understand the many small and large ways you can help, sometimes without much effort on your part, sometimes directly from the U.S.
- 7) Any ideas, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

KPSM Menon.

K. P. S. Menon
KPSM'sm:

P.S. Indian or American or simply a humanist citizen of this world. everyone is welcome and nearly anyone can help. (Documents were originally written for an Indian audience).

BACKGROUND OF DR. B.V. PARAMESWARA RAO

B.V. Parameswara Rao has taken his Ph.D. in Mineral Preparation from Pennsylvania State University. The day his dissertation was accepted was the day he left the US in 1967 for his native village Dimili in Visakhapatnam district and ever since then, he has been living in the villages. Naturally enough, his family and friends thought that he was crazy not to have taken the jobs that came his way in the US. But he has taken up various pioneering developmental projects particularly those involving the villagers themselves in the project-planning, execution, and management. He has built a few organizations - a high school, a small industry, a cooperative and a rural trust called Bhagavatula Charitable Trust (BCT).

BCT bloomed to be a pioneering rural development organization involved in integrated development of 27 villages near Yellamanchili in Visakhapatnam district. Its projects in "wasted" land development, women welfare, appropriate technology and health care delivery have received national and international recognition. Its programs on motivational training and income generation to the poor are note-worthy.

BCT, in its turn, has fostered a few organizations like BCT Mahila Samakhya, Grama Arogyalaya Trust in Visakhapatnam district, Grama Pragati Samstha and Grama Vikasa Samstha in Chittoor district, Spandana in E. Godavari district, and YARD in Srikakulam district. Further, its wasteland development project has turned out to be a model for Udaipur project in Rajasthan; its women's projects to be a model for 280 Mahila Mandals near Pune; its social forestry project a model for Berhampur in Orissa and Mirzapur in U.P..

Finally, the work of Paramaswara Rao is so well recognized both in the voluntary sector and the government circles that he has been elected the National Convenor for Common Action Program amongst voluntary agencies, a member of the National Wasteland Development Board and a council member of the National Literacy Mission.

Presently, his preoccupation is to increase the low 36% national literacy rate by involving the people themselves on a mass scale.

YOUR INDIA NEEDS YOU

INDIA needs you at this juncture

India needs your participation and assistance

If you are concerned about the poor and the downtrodden

If you would like to contribute your mite to restore your

India to its pristine glory

Then please realize that the literacy rate in India is a

poor 36% - that too after 40 years of independence

Also take notice that by the turn of the century, every

second illiterate in the world will be an Indian

As an Indian, if you could volunteer a few months time to

help generate a people's movement

If you would like to be one of the hundred who are willing

to try

Why not contact Dr. B.V. Parameswara Rao of Bhagavatula

Charitable Trust (world renowned BCT), who is the National

Convenor of LAMP (Literacy as a Movement of People)? He is

in the US just now trying to reach you.

Please contact him at 201/334-4586

PROJECT - VOLUNTEERS INDIA

I. Aim of the project

To locate volunteers in the US willing to spare a few months during the next 12 month period to be in India to make literacy a people's movement.

II. Contact person

Dr. B.V. Parameswara Rao
c/o Murty P. Bhavaraju
1061 Vail Road
Parsippany, N.J. 07054
Tel: (201) 334-4586

Handwritten:
Murthy P. Bhavaraju
612/379-1886

In India:

Bhagavatula Charitable Trust
Yellamanchili, Vizag Dist., A.P., 531055

III. Perspective

A. India, a country that could produce Bhagavadgita when elsewhere people did not know how to read and write; a country which could produce Mohenjadarro and Harrappa when elsewhere people were living under trees and caves - is now one of the "developing" countries!

B. When countries like Vietnam, Burma, Tanzania, Somali, Brazil, Cuba, and China could achieve 100% literacy in a short time, India's literacy rate is a poor 36% after 40 years of independence, spending Rs. 3000 crores a year on education.

C. The rich are getting richer, the poor poorer; there is leadership crisis, uncertainty, despair and corruption all over.

D. Even though the government is spending over Rs. 2500 crores a year on rural development, as per the admission of no less a person than the Prime Minister of the country only 12% of it is reaching the targeted poor rural population, 88% being gobbled up by the urbanites, the educated, and the vested interests.

IV. Background to the Present Proposal

If we critically analyze all the factors that are leading to this dismal situation, it can be discerned that it is lack of literacy skills that is basic to all the problems. In other words, bringing literacy to the door-steps of the poor and illiterate would help redeem the situation.

Realizing this, the government of India has instituted the National Literacy Mission, primarily to cater to the 15-35 age illiterates. But it is, after all, a government program and no government program in this direction ever delivered goods until the people participated enthusiastically. It should be a people's movement.

Actually a few voluntary agencies in India have initiated a few steps to make literacy a people's

movement. They have organized a few workshops and conventions culminating in a National Convention in Bangalore on July 1, 2, and 3, where vice-chancellors, senior government officers, school students, mahila mandal members et al have participated. An action plan is delineated.

V. Approach and Action Plan

A. It is non-classroom, volunteer based approach. That is to say the illiterate are taught by volunteers on a one to one basis, preferably in the places of their residence.

B. It is to cover illiterates in all age groups, not being restricted to the 15-35 age group alone. This generally would come to the 6-35 age group.

C. The instructors need to be mobilized as volunteers. There is no reason as to why the school-going boys and girls in 8th, 9th, and 10th classes and the educated youth in the villages can't teach.

D. The college students, other non-student youth, and the school teachers could be mobilized as group leaders giving guidance and assistance to student instructors.

E. In order to accomplish all of the above, proper atmosphere and necessary linkages need to be built up, not only to enthuse the illiterate learners but the student instructors as well.

F. Necessary incentives like public appreciation of the learners and instructors in the villages, convocations for the neo-literates need to be built up.

G. The required teaching-learning materials, measures for post-literacy follow up need to be developed.

H. Whenever and wherever possible the government resources, both monetary and material, need to be harnessed and taken advantage of.

I. The necessary linkages, both vertical and horizontal, need to be established.

J. The public men, literateurs, the government machinery, voluntary agencies, banks, schools, colleges, universities, youth clubs, mahila mandals, and last but not less important political institutions and men - all need to be drawn in, coordinated, and made to participate whole-heartedly and enthusiastically.

VI. Present Proposals

A. In order to coordinate the public institutions, the governmental machinery, the educational institutions including universities, persons with some image, vision, understanding, and missionary zeal are required. Further, they need to be available full-time, moving whenever and wherever required. They need to have access to the senior officers without any difficulty and should have the ready acceptability of all cross-sections of society. They should not be identified with any political party or any particular group. To some extent they should not

depend on local funds or be at the beck and call of local big-wigs.

B. If all these unusual characteristics need to be satisfied, it can be only with expatriates, who have no personal axe to grind in the local action. The people from the US generally fit into this admirably.

C. Therefore, the proposal is to locate enthusiastic and willing participants to volunteer to spend a few months in India.

D. This would enable us to gear up and move matters, in order to target at 20 crores of illiterate persons to become literate by September 8, 1990, the World Literary Day of International Literacy Year. So then we could double up the literacy rate by the census day of 1991.

VII. Conclusion

The literacy rate of 36% in India is alarmingly low so that it cannot be neglected any more. The educated in India owe a responsibility to help the literacy, having themselves enormously benefited by the highly subsidized educational system in the country, not to speak of those that had the education in India and reaping its benefit elsewhere. The present call to volunteer is also not too demanding, requesting only a few months in this year.

VIII. Hope

It is our earnest hope that this call will strike a concordant note in the minds of educated Indians and that they will rise to the occasion and restore India to its pristine glory.

REMORSE OR RESPONSIBILITY ???

Would you realize

- A. that the amount of money needed to make an undergraduate is equivalent to make 80 illiterates literate?
 - a graduate to 200 illiterates?
 - an engineer to 500 illiterates?
 - a medical doctor to 1000 illiterates?
- B. that if the matters are allowed to drift as present, by the turn of the century, every second illiterate in the world will be an Indian?

Do you as a person that received education in India feel concerned about these statistics? Would you like to discharge your social responsibility?

A CHALLENGE FOR YOUTH

- I. Many college and high school going youth of Indian origin

are looking forward to go to India and learn about India and its culture and tradition. Unfortunately they do not have an opportunity to know India. When they get to India on a trip with their parents, they only visit their relatives and rush back.

- II. Some parents wish that their children, particularly the college going or seniors in high school, to be exposed to India and its customs at a greater depth. Otherwise, they are afraid that their culture and roots would get lost in their family.
- III. In other words there is a felt need by the families in the US to have the kids exposed to real India and its customs, culture, and tradition.
- IV. Coming to the Indian side, the youth in India have heard so much about the US and its technological advancements that they are eager to get to meet and exchange notes and views with their counter-parts from the US.
- V. If, therefore, we take a batch of youth of Indian origin from the US (between 15 to 22 years of age) to India and facilitate their meeting the college and university youth in India, there is bound to be a good and everlasting interaction.
- VI. Further, a 2 week workshop could be planned for the US youth and orient them about (A) the country and (B) Literacy as a Movement of People (LAMP).
- VII. Then a series of exchanges could be planned in various places and universities. There, the US youth could exhort the Indian youth to take to LAMP. It is hoped that at least 10% of the Indian youth could then be motivated to generate a people's movement in India.
- VIII. A 6 week trip could be planned for \$1000 or a 3 month trip for \$2000, for board, lodge, and local travel, exclusive of the round trip from the US.
- IX. The outcome:
 - A. The youth of Indian origin
 1. would have seen, felt, and experienced India directly by themselves without parents
 2. would have enthused the Indian youth to take literacy as a people's movement and help in improving the poor literacy rate of 36% up to at least 72% by Sept. 8th - World Literacy Day in the International Literacy Year of 1990.
 3. would have given a social cause for the Indian youth thereby feel thrilled to have fathered a people's cause in India.
 - B. The youth in India
 1. would have learned a lot about the US, about the punctuality, good manners, hard work, and other good features of the west
 2. would involve themselves in their nation-building through the literacy program
 3. would have contributed to a healthy growth and understanding amongst themselves and those from abroad.

LET US LIGHT THE L-A-M-P OF DIWALI

Do You Know

- That the overall literacy rate in India today is only 36% after 40 years of independence and spending Rs. 3000 crores a year on Education.
- That countries like Vietnam, Burma, Tanzania, Somali, Brazil, Cuba and China have achieved 100% literacy in a short time.
- That by the year 2000 A.D every second illiterate in the world will be an Indian.

India, a country which could produce Bhagvad Gita when elsewhere people could not even read and write is now a "developing" country.

LAMP is Literacy As a Movement of People, targets to make 288 Million people literate by the year 1991.

We Can

- Devote an hour every week on LAMP
- Let others know about LAMP in India and abroad
- Save 25 cents a day for LAMP
- Raise funds for LAMP
- Volunteer with some of the social organisations in India for LAMP for a few months.

SOME IDEAS

RELATED TO LITERACY PROJECT

1. Make our friends, relatives and other known persons in India aware of the Problem, and the activities of DR. Rao; so that They can do something about this. — basically SPREAD THE MESSAGE —
2. Write to some Indian journals, so that They publish more material in the lines of that, published in "THE WEEK".
3. Dime A Day, [Quarter A Day or Dollar A Day] OR SOME OTHER Scheme to raise funds.
4. FUND RAISING —
 1. INDIVIDUAL SAVINGS (DAD etc.)
 2. COLLECTION FROM LOCAL INDIANS.
5. Devise a good Programme / Cultural Event / Games etc. to help raise Funds.
6. Get the addresses of different organisations in India, doing similar kind of job; so that we can find out and select one nearer to our locality in India and have Contacts with them; and send money etc.
emphasis: Right People; Trustworthy People to handle the money for the 'LITERACY' purpose.
7. Try some Volunteer activities right here in Minneapolis so that we will be better equipped to handle TEACHING and OTHER VOLUNTARY activities in India.

2. Have some organisational structure within our group
- i) to have better rapport with local bodies.
 - ii) to pursue the activities that are planned
 - iii) to prepare documents (letters etc) to help spread the message etc.

- "By the year 2000 A.D every second illiterate in the world will be an Indian".

Concerned? Then

Meet Dr. Rao

- "in 1967, the day after receiving a Ph.D. in Nuclear Chemistry, with excellent job offers in the U.S., he returned to his native village in India, to work with the people".

- meet a man who has served **selflessly** for 22 years in the villages of India
- who helped to **build schools** that run well
- who helped to turn "wasteland" into crop-yielding **bounty** for villagers
- who helped sequestered and suppressed **women** establish and run industries
- who came to Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi's** attention in 1981 only when a World Bank official casually mentioned him
- whose methods **inspired** many similar groups in Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh
- and much more.

Today he seeks to **double** the dismal Indian literacy rate of 36% by census day 1991 by having a mass movement of the people. That means he must reach **288 million** people. This project is called LAMP for "Literacy as a movement of people".

Impossible you think and say.

Come listen to him. He has so many interesting ideas and experiences to share with us.

U of M

(East Bank)

Parking: ramp behind, near river

Access: East River Road thru

Dinkytown

Tel.: 625-4177

Date: Sep/26

Time: 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Place: Women's Lounge

COFFMAN STUDENTS UNION

(seats 150)

There is also a 12:15 p.m. meeting, at the same date and building. There are other day and evening meetings, Sep/25 - 26. Also on Sep/25, 8:00 - 9:30 p.m., at HINDU MANDIR, 1835 Polk St. N.E., Minneapolis, 1 block east off Central Ave, open community meeting. LAMP: Minneapolis contact: K. P. S. Menon, 612/379-1886. Sponsored by India Club and the Indo-American Association.

K. P. S. Menon
1227 Adams St. N.E.
Minneapolis. MN, 55413
Tel.: 612/379-1886

1989/Sep/07

Dear Friends,

The attached documents say a lot more and say it better than I could describe in a letter to you. Please read them to see if we can help on the matters below.

Dr. Parameswara Rao will visit Minneapolis - St. Paul from Sep ^{25 Mon}/~~30~~ Saturday night thru ~~Oct/03~~ ^{Sep 26}.

- 1) The attached documents are being sent to a few of you as community leaders or friends in the hope you will carry this message to the rest of the community.
- 2) If any of you can host an evening gathering or take him around during parts of the day, please let me know.
- 3) Meeting with 10 people is just fine. Addressing 500 is fine too. He is in fact arriving from Washington D.C., after just such an address to the World Bank.
- 4) Some thoughts and suggestions on groups that might enjoy meeting him, groups whose members might be inspired by his message include:
 - Church mass
 - Rotary clubs, etc
 - India associations
 - Large or small company groups
 - University of MN, colleges
 - Gandhi birthday celebration, Oct/2
 - Literacy or New Wave groups
- 5) Look at the section on 'Challenge to Youth'. Even your children can have a life-altering and uplifting experience in India.
- 6) He has so many inspiring ideas, you have to hear them to understand the many small and large ways you can help, sometimes without much effort on your part, sometimes directly from the U.S.
- 7) Any ideas, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

KPSM Menon.

K. P. S. Menon
KPSM'sm:

P.S. Indian or American or simply a humanist citizen of this world. everyone is welcome and nearly anyone can help. (Documents were originally written for an Indian audience).

BACKGROUND OF DR. B.V. PARAMESWARA RAO

B.V. Parameswara Rao has taken his Ph.D. in Mineral Preparation from Pennsylvania State University. The day his dissertation was accepted was the day he left the US in 1967 for his native village Dimili in Visakhapatnam district and ever since then, he has been living in the villages. Naturally enough, his family and friends thought that he was crazy not to have taken the jobs that came his way in the US. But he has taken up various pioneering developmental projects particularly those involving the villagers themselves in the project-planning, execution, and management. He has built a few organizations - a high school, a small industry, a cooperative and a rural trust called Bhagavatula Charitable Trust (BCT).

BCT bloomed to be a pioneering rural development organization involved in integrated development of 27 villages near Yellamanchili in Visakhapatnam district. Its projects in "wasted" land development, women welfare, appropriate technology and health care delivery have received national and international recognition. Its programs on motivational training and income generation to the poor are note-worthy.

BCT, in its turn, has fostered a few organizations like BCT Mahila Samakhya, Grama Arogyalaya Trust in Visakhapatnam district, Grama Pragati Samstha and Grama Vikasa Samstha in Chittoor district, Spandana in E. Godavari district, and YARD in Srikakulam district. Further, its wasteland development project has turned out to be a model for Udaipur project in Rajasthan; its women's projects to be a model for 280 Mahila Mandals near Pune; its social forestry project a model for Berhampur in Orissa and Mirzapur in U.P..

Finally, the work of Paramaswara Rao is so well recognized both in the voluntary sector and the government circles that he has been elected the National Convenor for Common Action Program amongst voluntary agencies, a member of the National Wasteland Development Board and a council member of the National Literacy Mission.

Presently, his preoccupation is to increase the low 36% national literacy rate by involving the people themselves on a mass scale.

YOUR INDIA NEEDS YOU

INDIA needs you at this juncture

India needs your participation and assistance

If you are concerned about the poor and the downtrodden

If you would like to contribute your mite to restore your

India to its pristine glory

Then please realize that the literacy rate in India is a

poor 36% - that too after 40 years of independence

Also take notice that by the turn of the century, every

second illiterate in the world will be an Indian

As an Indian, if you could volunteer a few months time to

help generate a people's movement

If you would like to be one of the hundred who are willing

to try

Why not contact Dr. B.V. Parameswara Rao of Bhagavatula

Charitable Trust (world renowned BCT), who is the National

Convenor of LAMP (Literacy as a Movement of People)? He is

in the US just now trying to reach you.

Please contact him at 201/334-4586

PROJECT - VOLUNTEERS INDIA

I. Aim of the project

To locate volunteers in the US willing to spare a few months during the next 12 month period to be in India to make literacy a people's movement.

II. Contact person

Dr. B.V. Parameswara Rao
c/o Murty P. Bhavaraju
1061 Vail Road
Parsippany, N.J. 07054
Tel: (201) 334-4586

*Manoj Kumar
Contact
612/379-1886*

In India:

Bhagavatula Charitable Trust
Yellamanchili, Vizag Dist., A.P., 531055

III. Perspective

A. India, a country that could produce Bhagavadgita when elsewhere people did not know how to read and write; a country which could produce Mohenjadarro and Harrappa when elsewhere people were living under trees and caves - is now one of the "developing" countries!

B. When countries like Vietnam, Burma, Tanzania, Somali, Brazil, Cuba, and China could achieve 100% literacy in a short time, India's literacy rate is a poor 36% after 40 years of independence, spending Rs. 3000 crores a year on education.

C. The rich are getting richer, the poor poorer; there is leadership crisis, uncertainty, despair and corruption all over.

D. Even though the government is spending over Rs. 2500 crores a year on rural development, as per the admission of no less a person than the Prime Minister of the country only 12% of it is reaching the targeted poor rural population, 88% being gobbled up by the urbanites, the educated, and the vested interests.

IV. Background to the Present Proposal

If we critically analyze all the factors that are leading to this dismal situation, it can be discerned that it is lack of literacy skills that is basic to all the problems. In other words, bringing literacy to the door-steps of the poor and illiterate would help redeem the situation.

Realizing this, the government of India has instituted the National Literacy Mission, primarily to cater to the 15-35 age illiterates. But it is, after all, a government program and no government program in this direction ever delivered goods until the people participated enthusiastically. It should be a people's movement.

Actually a few voluntary agencies in India have initiated a few steps to make literacy a people's

movement. They have organized a few workshops and conventions culminating in a National Convention in Bangalore on July 1, 2, and 3, where vice-chancellors, senior government officers, school students, mahila mandal members et al have participated. An action plan is delineated.

V. Approach and Action Plan

A. It is non-classroom, volunteer based approach. That is to say the illiterate are taught by volunteers on a one to one basis, preferably in the places of their residence.

B. It is to cover illiterates in all age groups, not being restricted to the 15-35 age group alone. This generally would come to the 6-35 age group.

C. The instructors need to be mobilized as volunteers. There is no reason as to why the school-going boys and girls in 8th, 9th, and 10th classes and the educated youth in the villages can't teach.

D. The college students, other non-student youth, and the school teachers could be mobilized as group leaders giving guidance and assistance to student instructors.

E. In order to accomplish all of the above, proper atmosphere and necessary linkages need to be built up, not only to enthuse the illiterate learners but the student instructors as well.

F. Necessary incentives like public appreciation of the learners and instructors in the villages, convocations for the neo-literates need to be built up.

G. The required teaching-learning materials, measures for post-literacy follow up need to be developed.

H. Whenever and wherever possible the government resources, both monetary and material, need to be harnessed and taken advantage of.

I. The necessary linkages, both vertical and horizontal, need to be established.

J. The public men, literateurs, the government machinery, voluntary agencies, banks, schools, colleges, universities, youth clubs, mahila mandals, and last but not less important political institutions and men - all need to be drawn in, coordinated, and made to participate whole-heartedly and enthusiastically.

VI. Present Proposals

A. In order to coordinate the public institutions, the governmental machinery, the educational institutions including universities, persons with some image, vision, understanding, and missionary zeal are required. Further, they need to be available full-time, moving whenever and wherever required. They need to have access to the senior officers without any difficulty and should have the ready acceptability of all cross-sections of society. They should not be identified with any political party or any particular group. To some extent they should not

depend on local funds or be at the beck and call of local big-wigs.

B. If all these unusual characteristics need to be satisfied, it can be only with expatriates, who have no personal axe to grind in the local action. The people from the US generally fit into this admirably.

C. Therefore, the proposal is to locate enthusiastic and willing participants to volunteer to spend a few months in India.

D. This would enable us to gear up and move matters, in order to target at 20 crores of illiterate persons to become literate by September 8, 1990, the World Literary Day of International Literacy Year. So then we could double up the literacy rate by the census day of 1991.

VII. Conclusion

The literacy rate of 36% in India is alarmingly low so that it cannot be neglected any more. The educated in India owe a responsibility to help the literacy, having themselves enormously benefited by the highly subsidized educational system in the country, not to speak of those that had the education in India and reaping its benefit elsewhere. The present call to volunteer is also not too demanding, requesting only a few months in this year.

VIII. Hope

It is our earnest hope that this call will strike a concordant note in the minds of educated Indians and that they will rise to the occasion and restore India to its pristine glory.

REMORSE OR RESPONSIBILITY ???

Would you realize

- A. that the amount of money needed to make an undergraduate is equivalent to make 80 illiterates literate?
 - a graduate to 200 illiterates?
 - an engineer to 500 illiterates?
 - a medical doctor to 1000 illiterates?
- B. that if the matters are allowed to drift as present, by the turn of the century, every second illiterate in the world will be an Indian?

Do you as a person that received education in India feel concerned about these statistics? Would you like to discharge your social responsibility?

A CHALLENGE FOR YOUTH

- I. Many college and high school going youth of Indian origin

are looking foreward to go to India and learn about India and its culture and tradition. Unfortunately they do not have an opportunity to know India. When they get to India on a trip with their parents, they only visit their relatives and rush back.

II. Some parents wish that their children, particularly the college going or seniors in high school, to be exposed to India and its customs at a greater depth. Otherwise, they are afraid that their culture and roots would get lost in their family.

III. In other words there is a felt need by the families in the US to have the kids exposed to real India and its customs, culture, and tradition.

IV. Coming to the Indian side, the youth in India have heard so much about the US and its technological advancements that they are eager to get to meet and exchange notes and views with their counter-parts from the US.

V. If, therefore, we take a batch of youth of Indian origin from the US (between 15 to 22 years of age) to India and facilitate their meeting the college and university youth in India, there is bound to be a good and everlasting interaction.

VI. Further, a 2 week workshop could be planned for the US youth and orient them about (A) the country and (B) Literacy as a Movement of People (LAMP).

VII. Then a series of exchanges could be planned in various places and universities. There, the US youth could exhort the Indian youth to take to LAMP. It is hoped that at least 10% of the Indian youth could then be motivated to generate a people's movement in India.

VIII. A 6 week trip could be planned for \$1000 or a 3 month trip for \$2000, for board, lodge, and local travel, exclusive of the round trip from the US.

IX. The outcome:

A. The youth of Indian origin

1. would have seen, felt, and experienced India directly by themselves without parents

2. would have enthused the Indian youth to take literacy as a people's movement and help in improving the poor literacy rate of 36% up to at least 72% by Sept. 8th - World Literacy Day in the International Literacy Year of 1990.

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