

WE TOO CAN MAKE OTHERS PROSPER

By N.H. Athreya

WE TOO CAN PROSPER – that is the title of a book published in Britain some time after World War II. It summarised the findings of the many Anglo-American Productivity Teams that visited U.S.A. and reported on the big possibilities for Britain.

WE TOO CAN MAKE OTHERS PROSPER - this title arises out of observing a 24 year silent but significant experiment in rural rejuvenation that has been going in Kachch – water-starved Kachch.**

- First, let us be gods, And then help others to be gods.
the best way to serve yourself
Is to serve others with selfless love.
Ramana Maharishi

‘Be and Make’: Let this be your motto.

Swami Vivekananda

- Yadum ooray, yavarum kelir
(Every place is my place, everybody
is my relative.)

An anonymous Tamil poet.

- At the deep mystic level, No man is
an island entire of itself;
Every man is a piece of the
continent.

John Donne

- Do something for someone,
somewhere.

Richard Evans

Sentiments like these are our own. The prophets, poets and philosophers have a way of effectively expressing them.

Instinctively we feel connected to all, though socially we feel connected only to a few.

We feel particularly good when we do things for distant connections.

Circumstances do not permit us to do what we want to do. Therefore we expect others to do on our behalf. This ‘others’ often happens to be our government since they represent us. They do do but because of avoidable and unavoidable limitations, what they do is too biased, too impersonal and therefore too little and too late.

This situation has led to the emergence of private-public efforts either in the form of NGOs or Foundations. It is as well.

**Please see the attached extracts from the latest Annual Progress Report of the ShreeVivekanand Research and Training Institute, Mandvi, Kachch.

EXCEL SETS UP AN NGO

Shree Vivekanand Research and Training Institute - VRTI for short - is a not for profit organisation (NPPO) that was set up in Kachch, Mandvi in 1975 at the initiative of Shri K.C. Shroff, Chairman, Excel Industries Ltd.

Started by a scientist, the company (Excel) believes: When you understand nature and go with nature, nature obliges you and blesses you.

Excel has the tradition of understanding the nature of chemicals and going with it in the interests of the industrial community. This scientific-cum-pragmatic approach enabled them to manufacture chemicals for the first time in India – and with no technological help from the west. And soon they turned to make agricultural chemicals in good part.

Their world has been an expanding world, not so much in the sense of geographical territory or global conquest as in the sense of philosophy. Therefore, they have been making available their technological, organizational and leadership talents to the country especially in times of natural calamities such as the earthquake in Latur or cyclone in coastal Andhra.

In 1975 the Shroffs decided to extend their scope of scientific activity from a factory compound to a district boundary. And they chose Kachch.

One seeming reason is it is familiar territory; they happen to hail from that area.

The real reason is the challenge Kachch holds. If a difficult terrain like Kachch with an average annual rainfall of 10 inches or less can be handled successfully, we will get pointers for the regeneration of the rest of rural India .

Some of the people of Kachch chose to meet the challenge by moving away from the place and adventuring in other places and other countries. And thanks to their sense of enterprise and values, they have made good. All credit to them.

The majority and the disadvantaged, however, are left in rural Kachch to the mercy of not so kind nature and more, the unkindness of man.

Historically, the foreign ruler took systematic steps to dis-empower people and make them pathetically dependent on the state. Over the years, the rural people - the resourceful and hardy rural people – became helpless and hopeless. The schooled urbanities joined the rulers in this unholy game. Many have waxed eloquent on this man's inhumanity to man .

The first and fundamental task of a free government is to restore the dignity and resourcefulness of the rural people, the makers of real wealth of the nation. We have not done it yet in our country.

Worse, we have continued and worsened the legacy of the British rule. We have replaced the white saheb raj by brown saheb raj. Not because wiser counsel was not available but because the convenience of the few mattered. The India of My Dreams of Gandhiji still remains a dream.

Instead of ringing their hands and apportioning blame all around, the Shroff family asked the question: How can we make people productive as they are, where they are.

Make the people economically and socially strong. It is weakness that invites exploitation. So long as the rural people are weak, they will continue to be exploited.

WATER BREATH OF LIFE

The first area was naturally water. The quantity and quality of water. When we remember the annual average rainfall is ten inches or less and when we further remember that a good part of the ground water available is saline, we see the place and urgency of this thrust area,

Harvesting rain water was the first step. In the poetic language of Kaka, how to make the running water walk and walking water crawl and crawling water fill the wells is the challenge. This made possible irrigation. This made possible crop production. This made possible raised income for the families and all that goes with it.

DESERT STARTS BLOOMING

Known for their capacity to make theoretical practical, they went about the job with unbelievable stamina and made the following (among others) a vibrant reality.

Mr.Kanti Shroff - popularly known as Kaka - and his colleagues noted that the place is rich, the people are 'rich' and the area has potential. Only the place and the people have been neglected. All that needs to be done is to mobilise the natural resources and advantages of the people and the place.

While resources may be limited, the ingenuity with which those resources can be managed can never be limited.

A systematic beginning was made by setting up an NGO in the name of the Shree Vivekanand Research and Training Institute in the year

Assembling scientists, technologists, engineers, extension workers and others, this NGO took initiative in certain areas.

RAINWATER HARVESTING AND LIFT IRRIGATION SCHEME

Units installed till 1998:601.

Time to complete each unit:5 months

Cost per unit:Rs.16.5 lacs or or just over \$36000

Seen benefits:

- Each unit makes for 200 acre land irrigation
- Pure and safe drinking water
- Green environment

- Each unit makes 40 rural families self employed Bringing an income of Rs.50,000 per year
- Enabling them to give employment to 80 families Making possible reverse migration Bringing in self help groups
- Improvement of the quantity and quality of ground water

This was followed by the more comprehensive programme of water shed management.

This is more than irrigation, this is more than crop cultivation, this is a community development programme built of course around a watershed. Here is the statistical summary of the work done till 1998. I say "statistical" because the real human story – a heart-warming, inspiring and rewarding-for-all-concerned story - cannot be said in words except probably by a poet. It is a major transformation. It is enabling man being man, a family being a family, a community being a community.

WATERSHED SCHEMES

Completed:23

Time for complete installation:4 years

Cost of installation:Rs.27.5 lacs or \$60000.

Yielding benefits like:

- Integrated development of the village (land, cattle, housing, forest etc.)
- Improvement in water table (20 to 30 ft.)

- Water management
- Water conservation
- Improvement in water quality 1000 to 1400 TDS salinity down
- Family income of a minimum of Rs.50,000 for each family
- Local village leadership and the resulting sense of worthiness

There are other projects relating to other aspects of rural life - cattle, bee-keeping, health and hygiene, traditional artisanship etc. - all of which are calculated to enrich, empower and enable the rural people a healthy, dignified life. To take one of the minor examples:

SMOKELESS COOKING GAS (CHULAS) PROJECT

- Units installed between 1982 and 1998 :20714 in 150 villages
- Time for installation:One hour and so done in batches of 10
- Each unit costs:Rs.90 and Rs.900 for a batch of 10

Each unit benefits one family in the following ways:

- Saves women and children from TB
- Saves them from eye sicknesses
- Saves them from kitchen wall scrapping
- Saves fuel cost near 30 per cent
- Gives a cleaner environment

We are mentioning this little project to say that every little (when done) counts to raise the quality of life of people. We can see our opportunity in a range of options

SUSTAINING FUNDS

In the initial years, the trustees and the company that backed this NGO donated funds to the extent they can telling themselves: Let us do what we can.

As the breakthrough projects started yielding results, making deserts bloom as it were, the friends of the trustees volunteered to back the extensions of these projects to more of the villages, And that gave more relief to more people in more villages.

An unexpected event that happened just before the Silver Jubilee of the Institute made the trustees ask themselves: Should we allow our work to be limited by the funds that happen to flow? Or should we let the world know that we would like to cooperate with them in extending this work to cover at least the 934 villages of Kachch district? May be that way we can have an integrated rural development programme in one district in record time - say ten years. Then we will have built a multiplier model. And from that model we can accelerate the process of integrated rural development by setting up the necessary machinery and agencies to spread the conceptual and operational and philosophical know-how.

The recent cyclone in Kachch has also given it a further sense of urgency.

MY PREFERENCE

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day

I'd rather one would walk the talk with me than merely tell the why.

The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear.

Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear.

The best of all the preachers are those who live their deeds.

For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done.

I can watch your hands in action but your tongue too fast may run.

The lectures you deliver may be very wise and true,

But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.

I may not understand the high advice you give,

But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

When I see a deed of kindness, I am eager to be kind.

When a weaker person stumbles and a strong one stays behind

Just to see how to help out; then the wish grows strong in me

To become as big and thoughtful as I know that friend to be.

All travellers can witness that the best of guides today

Is not the one who tells them but the one who shows the way.

One good person teaches many; people believe what they behold.

One good deed of kindness is worth forty that are told.

Who stands with those of honor learns to hold that honour dear.

or right living speaks a language which to everyone is clear.

An able speaker may have eloquence, but I will usually say,

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.

Anonymous

THE MISSING LINK

Is it not true that the government has been supporting rural development schemes in a big way? It has been.

The government does allocate funds for various aspects of rural development. It however assumes just that will do the trick. It does not. Instead of asking why we are not getting results, it has gone on the same way year after and what is the result? Funds got funnelled or budgets got lapsed. Since the focus in government is spending and not outcome, it has not occurred to governments that their funds to become productive they need an agency – a caring and competent agency and this has been the missing link all along. The job of this link or bridge is not merely crucial but difficult. It calls for unique skills besides patience and stamina on the one hand and compassion and care on the other.

Whether it is relief or recovery, funds is only one factor. Relief and recovery to happen we require a non-commercial, a non-political agency that has entrepreneurial, organizational, leadership and managerial capabilities, an agency that will assemble and coordinate the other factors.

A STRENGTH THAT MATTERS

Building and providing this link has been one of the major achievements of VRTI. To play this link we require two sets of skills. One set refers to working with government agencies and departments. The other set refers to working with the rural folk. This calls for expertise in sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology and political science. This is more so when we want the rural folk to give of their time and skill. We have to remember all the projects are people participation projects

It is not once bit but twice shy. It is a case of being bit hundreds of times. The rural folk are reconciled to the idea of either living in a deprived state or move to the towns leaving the families home and live there in a deprived state. They think that when government comes in it comes only to further make their life much more pathetic. There are people that deserve assistance. There are individuals and agencies that have the discretionary funds to give that assistance. What is often missing is the

“technology” that will convert the giving into the projected outcome. However sumptuous the funding is and however well-meaning the NGOs are, the desired results do not become possible unless the intervening agency NGO has the needed organization, competence and Credibility. Few NGOs have this rare strength.

It is this unique bridge-building, funder-fundee link-providing strength that has enabled VRTI to make funds coming from CAPART, The District Rural Development agency, Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, Gujarat Energy Development Agency, State Institute of Rural Development, Kandla Port Trust and international funding bodies productive, to yield projected results

The ShreeVivekanand Research and Training Institute has now the organizational know-how and the needed spirit to make Kachch district a multiplier model in rural regeneration., in integrated rural development, in less than a decade. Of course, it will work hand in hand with other like-minded agencies.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

To make this feasible, funds are needed. The funds will have to be private funds, since the government funds - even the limited allocations - are uncertain in the first instance. Also funding coming in depends on the vagaries of the political weather and idiosyncrasies of people in the chair. Again, the funds are only for the projects. - projects that are implemented on behalf of the government agencies. NGO has to find its own funds for its organisational, administrative and other expenses.

Running an agency made up of scientists, technologists, engineers and field staff call for funds. Committed manpower is the key asset of VRTI and to have enough of them, it should have enough of funds.

All these years, the Shroff group of companies and the friends of the family have been giving consistent help. The logic has been: Do the best you can with what you have. Recently, in the larger interests, the VRTI has modified its funding policy. It is now open to the idea of receiving funds from individuals and groups, from corporations and foundations, national and international.

The promise and prospect is that man's ingenuity and organizing ability will make a minor miracle possible in a part of the planet.

MULTIPLIER MODEL

The same will serve as a multiplier model for the many districts in India and elsewhere in the world, especially in arid and semi-arid sections of the world.

The same will serve as a multiplier model in another sense. Corporations individually or in teams can adopt a district for integrated rural development and make available their organisation building and managing competence. The districts may be chosen for sentimental reasons or for the simple reason that the chosen district is a part of the planet.

In spite of the inadequacies of the government, a thousand corporations can make the 500 districts prosperous by adopting a district each.

LET US BUILD ONE FIRST AND FAST

Before we do that, we need an impressive multiplier model. If such a model is the Kachch district, anybody can take heart.

My hope and prayer is that we together help complete this Kachch project in record time with the help of "VRTI"...

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

According to current surveys

The Kachch district's need

In 6 concrete areas are as follows:

PROJECT	NEED	DONE **	TO BE DONE	PERUNIT COST/TIME	BATCH SIZE	BENEFITING
1. Smokeless cooking gas (chulas)	150000	22714	12286	Rs.90/1 hr.	20 costing Rs.1800 (\$40) Net income	Women and children Environment
2. Biogas unit	25000	111	24899	Rs.9900/ 30 man days	1 costing Rs.9900(\$200) Net income Organic manure	Women and children Environment
3. Bee keeping	50000	376	44624	Rs.2300/ 4 man days	10 costing Rs.23000(\$500)	Added income Crop Productivity
4. Fodder bank	100	100	100	Rs.1100000 365 man days	1 costing Rs.1100000 (\$21000) Revolving fund	Cattle welfare Cost savings
5. Rainwater harvesting & lift irrigation	2000	601	1399	Rs.1650000 5 months	1 costing Rs.1650000 (\$ 35000)	Environment Quality and quantity of water Wetland farming Added income Reverse migration Rural employment
6. Watershed integrated village integrated development	300	23	277	Rs.27.5 lacs/ 4 years Unit size:500hectars	1 costing Rs.2750000 \$60000	The above plus village Development

WHAT IS IN OUR HANDS

You cannot help any one. You can only serve, serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege. If the Lord grants that you can help any one of His children, blessed you are. Blessed you are that that privilege was given to you, when others had it not. Do it only as a worship.
Swami Vivekananda

If you are gifted to make crores, give in lacs.
If you are gifted to make lakhs, give in thousands.
If you are gifted to make thousands, give in tens.

If you are not able to give even tens, don't lose heart.

Spread the good news; say a good word.

Subramanya Bharati

Tamil poet

(A free rendering of his poem)

I don't know what your destiny will be; but one thing I know. The only ones among you who will really be happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.

Albert Schweitzer

Giving is gracious;

The more distant the recipient is

The more gracious the giving becomes.

N.H.A.

The joy of having a fair income – and having a fair income calls for unusual talent -is the discretion it gives one to give away part of it. Such a giving adds to the quality and productivity and therefore the prosperity of “others”.

Besides extending our good wishes and expressing our admiration, we can back VRTI with funds. The funds can be in hundreds or thousands or lakhs. The funds can be for general discretionary use or they can be for specific projects like the welfare of women and children. It can be as low as Rs.1600 (\$40). The above chart gives an idea of what human and material wealth one's contribution can create.

We celebrate so many days – birthdays, anniversary days, remembrance days and the other days like the Mother's Day. We celebrate them now for the near. May we also celebrate them for those who are far, very far, by making donations on those happy days to improve their quality of life? Can we thus share our prosperity?

When we give, we have related feedback options:

We may give and seek a report on the spending.

We may give, get a report and make a visit - to see how it has helped.

We may make a visit to Kachch to see what has been done and choose our quantum and periodicity of giving.

We may give what we can and thank God we have been given this privilege.

Achievements of the institute in last 24 years (including Bhavnagar centre)

Sr. no.	Name of the activities	Number	Expenditure incurred(Rs.)	Area benefitted (acres) /no.of beneficiaries
1.	Rain Water Harvesting			
	a. Dams	281	7,66,15,218.00	17633
	b. R.T.wells	90		
	c. Farm ponds	215	50,42,904.00	1511
	d. Individual wells recharged	836	1,51,793.00	836 (farmers)
	e. Nala plugs	152	34,26,036.00	1273
	f. Embankment	7	1,38,883.00	99
	g. Tank renovation	14	15,16,802.00	179
	h. Continuous trenches (mts)	5483	38,383.00	
	i. Gully plugs	42	1,10,948.00	116
	j. Land levelling (farmers)	2	69,009.00	7
	k. Loose boulders	217	3,07,049.00	312
	l Staggered trenches	28000	4,10,450.00	220
	m. Field bunding (farmers)	67	2,48,190.00	192
	n. Soak pits	159	91,437.00	159 (families)
	o. Protection bunds (mts.)	22413	3,53,399.00	-
	p. Overhead tank, Nari	1	11,82,105.00	13000 (people)
	q. Installation of pipeline for drinking water	2	10,92,993.00	{ 1 village & 1 T.B.hospital
	r. Compound wall for community polytechnic, Kardej	1	1,09,224.00	
	s. Check dam repairing	1	45,000.00	12 (acres)
2.	Agriculture			
	a. Kisan nurseries (115,000 plants)	9	1,01,186.00	
	b. Bee keeping colonies	376	5,66,400.00	37 (farmers)
	c. Bullock cart	1	18,350.00	whole village
	d. Horticultural plantation (farmers)	601	29,40,117.00	1586 (acres)
	e. Crop demonstration plots (acres)	64	1,00,478.00	64 (farmers)
	f. Kitchen garden kits	1117	10,727.00	1117 (families)
	g. Teak plantation (trees)	37255	1,19,300.00	93 (acres)
	h. Dusting machine	141	70,500.00	141 (families)
	i. Afforestation (plants)	7313	75,311.00	370 (acres)
	j. Farmers' tours	6	1,85,786.00	229 (farmers)
	k. Pasture development		1,52,425.00	293 (acres)
	l. Live hedge(mts.)	225	2,500.00	2.50 (acres)
	m. Water tank for plantation	1	42,500.00	

Contd.

Sr. no.	Name of the activities	Number	Expenditure incurred(Rs.)	Area benefitted (acres) /no.of beneficiaries
3.	Animal Husbandry			
	a. Bull house	1	1,03,135.00	whole village
	b. Fodder bank	2	1,00,300.00	"
	c. Deworming -sheep,goat & cattle	51	1,56,209.00	31944
	d. Vaccination (camps)	22	78,432.00	6397 (cattle)
	e. Cattle camps	32	75,781.00	3931 (cattle)
	f. Grass demonstration plots	24	1,144.00	24 (farmers)
	g. Silvi-pasture	-	43,340.00	77 (acres)
	h. Drinking water tank for cattle (Avedo)	1	15,000.00	-
	i. Travis crates	14	60,800.00	
	j. Chaff cutters	675	1,90,175.00	675 (families)
	k. Bull distribution	1	5,000.00	All cows of a village
4.	Drip irrigation	101	56,70,000.00	405 (acres)
5.	Health & Hygiene			
	a. Smokeless chullahs	20,724	12,00,540.00	20724 (families)
	b. Latrines	2543	76,29,000.00	2543 (families)
	c. Ambulatory service(Naliya)	1	6,55,705.00	782 (patients)
	d. Medical camp	1	15,523.00	306 (patients)
6.	Bio-gas plants	111	7,99,200.00	111 (families)
7.	Employment generation programmes	75	18,75,000.00	1504 (trainees)
8.	Mithi dam lift irrigation project (Naliya)	1	16,57,960.00	A demonstration model for farmers
9.	Cyclone relief work		92,05,870.00	cyclone affected people
10.	Portable chullahs	300	10,200.00	300 (families)
11.	Training programme for w/s village workers, various NGOs (workers), honey bee farmers	10 (classes)	2,07,305.00	228 (trainees)
12.	Dairy demonstration project	1	30,00,000.00	31 (villages) 650 (families)
13.	Cattle feed unit	1	2,80,000.00	64305 (Man days)
14.	*Gaushala unit	1		
Total Expenditure			Rs.12,83,71,022/-	

* A demonstration model for farmers