

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN MALIWADA

I would like to tell you a few stories about Maliwada - about what has happened in a little village in the state of Maharashtra, India.

When I first left to go back to Delhi and then on to Maliwada, after three years in the United States, I was really frightened of what had happened over those three years in India. There was a sense of paralysis, a sense of collapse all around; when people thought that nothing could happen. There was a feeling of negativism all around. I went back with that feeling but sensed, in the midst of that, a new positivism coming out. The national scene has changed radically in India over these past few months. There is a sense of newness about India. I never refrain from praising my Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi for what she has done and is doing in the country. Her 20-point program is the Blue Print for Progress. It has impressed many. The new national slogans are on billboards splattered all across the nation: "The Nation is on the Move." "We March to a Better Tomorrow." I would like to talk about Maliwada in the context of this sense of newness, this sense of confidence that has emerged from the national policy of the government.

India is not going to move ahead unless the 80% of the population living in the rural areas moves along with the cities. There is still a gap of centuries between villages and cities. After 27 years, the national leaders have decided that the country cannot move ahead unless the rural population moves. That is why our thinking has been so right on target. We have decided to move, in India, to the rural with an intensive push that we have never done before.

Maliwada is just at the right point of history now. Maliwada has already become a symbol of what a new rural India will look like, not just to the local man, of course, but most important, to the industrial world and to the government structures. What Maliwada is doing is a symbol and a sign of what it means to move as a rural population; as the rural world. I don't want it to come as blowing your own trumpet - but I have sensed the feeling that Maliwada has already become that symbol.

Let us go back to two months before the Consult happened in Maliwada, when the first troops, about six people, arrived in that little village. It was late in the evening when we entered the village, November, dark and cold and dismal. All of a sudden we said, "My God, where are we?" In the morning when we went around the village we had to watch our step, literally, because at any moment we would have stepped into a pile, a ditch, or stumbled against stones, or become entangled in thorns. And all of the village decided to do something about it. When they saw people from outside, they said, "That's not a good way to welcome these people, whoever they are. Let's clean up." They decided to have several cleanup days, what we call "soft miracles," in the village. With those cleanup days, the face of the village started changing.

We began our pre-consult survey and data collection. We went from house to house, made friends with the people, sat and chatted with them, and had innumerable cups of tea. We went to Aurangabad to the Zilla Parishad offices, district level offices, where all the records are kept for the rural

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areas. We went from office to office collecting data on almost every aspect of what was needed.

I will never forget what happened one day. Two of us went to the irrigation office and wanted to get some data on how many canals, tanks, reservoirs, and irrigation possibilities there were in the village and in nearby areas. We went to the office with a big authorization letter from the Chief Minister's chief Secretary, Mr. Sathe. We said, "We are the ICA and we are here in Maliwada at the invitation of the Chief Minister of the state of Maharashtra. We are conducting surveys and intend to do a social and economic development project and would like some information." He said, "What?" "We are from Maliwada, sir, you know Maliwada?" "Maliwada? What is that?" "Sir, it is a village." "Village? Where?" "Sir, it is at the foot of the Daulatabad Fort." "You mean there is a village called Maliwada at the foot of Daulatabad Fort?" "Yes, Sir." "Well, I don't know if I can help you, but let me try."

He told his secretary to bring the map of that area. He brought the map. He looked all over and couldn't find Maliwada. Then he said, "Well, bring in a magnifying glass." With the magnifying glass he went all over that territory and finally found Maliwada. He said, "Oh, so Maliwada is there." I said, "Yes, Sir, and we would like some information from you on that." He said, "I'm sorry, we haven't done anything in that area. But, well, there are some tanks nearby but we don't have real data to give you."

It was the same story at office after office after office. Maliwada was like an unknown thing. This reflected the feeling that the villagers had - that they were a forgotten people, a neglected people, that nobody cared about them or knew they even existed.

The Consult was the first big miracle that happened in Maliwada. The one-week Consult changed the history of that place. International people arrived, important people from India arrived and a lot of villagers came together. That told the village of Maliwada and the neighboring village that this place was not going to be the same again. It had got to change. It was going to be different. The Consult changed the image of the village. They no longer considered themselves as forgotten, as neglected, but as people who were going to do something. Not that something was going to be done to them, but that they were going to do something for themselves. That got conveyed to them in the period of a week.

About 50 people were employed from the village to change a 700 year old ruin into an ICA building. It's thick stone walls were all crumbling, and the entrance was tottering. Inside there was a big mud pile with thorns, cactus, crusted apple trees and a lot of snakes. It was cleaned out and within a matter of three weeks, that place was transformed. The villagers never used to go to that place, they thought it was haunted, knew it was snake-infested. But all that has changed. The villagers knew that something was going to happen. The backdrop of the historic old fort tells them that there has been a glorious past. The rebuilt building told the villagers that now is the time to look forward to the glorious future.

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The things that have happened in Maliwada after the Consult have amazed us. Not because we knew we had the methods to do things well, but because we have seen a determination and a decision in the total people to move ahead. This past Sunday we celebrated the completion of six months of work in Maliwada. We had a big celebration from morning until night. There were parades, floats, tableaux and competitions. We had a lot of eating, tea drinking and fun, together.

On January 20, 1976 the Human Development Project was launched. On the 26th, six days later, Dr. Rafio Zakaria, the Minister of State, came to inaugurate the switch for the first electricity in the village of Maliwada. In those few days we got done what had been impossible for years.

About five or six years ago, the applications were first made for electricity in the village. The petition was taken in, lamps, poles and posts arrived but nothing happened. Dr. Zakaria was to come to inaugurate it, but was rushed a message to please not come, the electricity had not arrived.

The way it was done was to go to the government structures and tell them that the future lies in the rural areas and that this village had decided to move. They said, "We will be convinced if you can bring us a deposit of 900 rupees from the villagers. We want to see if they are really serious about this business. If they can give a deposit, we are willing to give them the electricity in four days and put 50,000 rupees investment in, too." We went back with that story and talked to the elders of the village. They said, "Why not? We will collect." A Harijan, an untouchable, a second class citizen, went door to door and collected deposit money from his area. Early in the morning he came back with a bundle of one rupee notes, two rupee notes and said, "This is one hundred and fifty rupees from my colony. I am going to the Hindu colony now and do the same." By that evening he had collected all of the 900 rupees. We took it to the government and said, "Here is your deposit, sir. Can we get the electricity?" They sent their men and within four days everything was done. All the poles were erected, the wires pulled through and the lights were switched on.

That was a remarkable day in the history of Maliwada, not because of the electricity, but because of one other very important thing that happened. The Harijan and the caste Hindu have always been separated. In Maliwada there are two Harijan colonies. One colony has adopted Buddhism as their religion and the others are still Harijan and at the center is the Hindu area. They have never come together even though they all lived in the village, went to the same shops, the same flour mill and moved in the same area. But their wells were different, their areas were different, and they didn't intermingle.

During the consult, something happened. They started sitting together and they ate together in the Consult hall. By the 26th of January the Harijans took the initiative of inviting the Hindus of the village to have a cup of tea. And would you believe it, the Hindus went and drank a cup of tea in the Buddhist temple for the first time in Maliwada. That has been a great landmark for us.

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It told us that these people have really decided to move. Of course, traditions die hard. We don't say that the problem is solved. It will take probably another century to solve it, but we have seen the disintegration, the dissolving of that problem. We have seen and the people have seen the coming together as one people to do something. This is not changing anybody's religious beliefs. If you are a Buddhist, you remain Buddhist, if you are a Hindu, you remain Hindu, Muslim, you remain, but deciding to be one people, to move ahead.

Miracle stories are those that point to a rapid change, that take an impossible situation and transform it immediately. That is what a miracle is. On Sundays, for three hours, the whole village comes together for a Sharmdan. Sharmdan is literally a labor donation. You give your services, or your labor, to do something. They clean up a place, level a place, put up a park, plant a few trees, or do whatever they have decided to do. On one Sunday they decided to beautify the whole village in those few hours. They said, "We'll whitewash the houses, we'll level the road and collect stones, line them on the side of the street and give them a limewash so they'll look white, and make little platforms around the trees." They divided themselves into teams and assigned everybody to work in those teams. Each house was freshly painted - some villagers had even gone and bought colored paint to put on their front doors. Flower pots were hung on each house and the streets were beautifully lined. Within a matter of a few hours the village changed. The rapid change that took place that day has remained with the people. That evening a villager who had been out of the village the whole day, stopped as he entered the village. He was confused where he was. It had happened that quickly. That is what a miracle is.

Another rapid change that happened was the enrollment of school children in the preschool. When we arrived in Maliwada there was a government primary school which had eight-five students on their rolls. Only forty attended because the rest either did babysitting, looked after the sheep, or worked on the farm; the school was always half empty. We would go past it all the time and see the teacher with her feet up on the chair and the headmaster with his feet up on the chair, with a book, just nodding. The kids were also sleeping there. Nothing really happened. It was a dying school. Then the preschool was announced. We said that this was for the age group that did not go to the primary school, the two to five year age group. We'd begin with fifty children the first month.

There were hordes of mothers and fathers and children. We had said it would be first come, first served and I think all the seats were filled within the first hour. The registrations were done. They pushed us so hard to expand the school, we did and now there are one hundred sixty children in the preschool. When you go into the village you see one group of children going to the bathroom singing, "When Iron Men Go Marching In," and another group going to watch the tractors work singing, "One, Two, Three, Four; One, Two, Three, Four; Four by Four." All around the village they are singing. We saw that within the first week children came out from corners and said, "Iron Man, Iron Man." The imagery of Iron Man has been instilled in them. They are the Iron Men and Women of the future. We hear the ladies also, inside their little homes, singing to the other kids who do not yet go to that school. They don't know any English, they are not literate, but they learned all those songs from the kids. We also sing,

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"India is a Wonderful Place." You hear the villagers sing that song and it does something to you. The vigor, the enthusiasm, the determination with which they sing that song.

We went with our education proposal to the education minister in Bombay who has been very helpful to us. Our proposal was to take over the primary school and give it the flavor of a model school. She said, "You give your proposal to me and I'll see that it goes through." We have been running the model school since June with four hundred children enrolled.

Also, the infant school has begun. This is something remarkable because women don't like to give their little infants to anybody. That is true with any woman; I know it myself. Being both an Indian woman and a village woman, it's absolutely unthinkable to give your child to a structure like infant school for the whole day. However, the people have come to realize that structural care is necessary and that it works. So the infant school is also filled with kids. From the age of naught to sixteen, all the children are in a school structure. That is a first in the state of Mararashtra. Never before, in a village situation, has the total school aged population been in school structures.

Fifth City has taught us about the youth program, too. Maliwada has its Rocket Program: Solar Rockets and Lunar Rockets. But now the Lunar Rockets have decided that they don't want to be just Lunar, they also want to be Solar. So, they're all Solar Rockets now. You should see them; the way they move. Solar Rockets are the ones who demolished all the abandoned mud huts and leveled this place and cleaned up that place. You give any responsibility to Solar Rockets and you're sure that it'll be done. That's the kind of children now in Maliwada.

Just a word about adult literacy. Marathi and English are taught. There are about 150 people attending those classes. Since the electricity has arrived, you'll find somebody reading all the time under every lamp post.

There is activity after eight o'clock for the first time and the village is alive. Every Tuesday night we have Guild Meetings. Every Wednesday night we have Stake Meetings. Every Friday night we have Guild Leaders Meetings which are the methods training for guild leaders. About thirty or forty of them come; often the room is full. Every first Sunday of the month there is a community meeting and every Saturday night there is some kind of festive event - discontinuous celebration - the women have a competition, something a singing group, sometimes a pageant.

Remember the magnifying glass story? Imagine now, the limousines that drive into the village, the high government officials that come in, the industrial tycoons that come in. It is amazing. Maliwada has gone to the high structures, gone to the world. You see that. The villagers say, "What has happened now? Where were all of these people before. Why is it that now they are coming?" When visitors come something happens to the villagers. Once again they resolve that they are the symbol. Visitors come and the villagers know that they are the symbol of what is going to happen in the future.

There are a lot of stories about visitors but I want to share one with you

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particularly. When dignitaries arrive, especially when Joe Mathews arrives, everyone wants to go and see him. We have a truck and trucks are not supposed to carry passengers, they are supposed to carry only materials, but we have taken a special permission from the city of Aurangabad to carry passengers in that, and whenever we have dignitaries arrive we take truckloads of people to the airport. That is some experience. Eighty percent of Maliwada people have not been out of the village, not even to Arangabad, much less to other places. Only twenty percent have moved around. So we have decided that we will take truckloads of people to the airport. You should see the faces and the expressions.

Early in the morning a crowd of men and women and children get all dressed up, board the truck and go singing into Arangabad, 30 kilometers away. All the way they sing and say the ritual, "Maliwada is another great happening." We reach the airport and the plane comes. "Joe Mathews is coming," we say, "probably there are one or two more people coming with him." So they expect three people to come out of the airplane. They see this thing coming and say, "Well, it is big enough for three people." The plane gradually comes down and looks bigger and bigger and bigger. Their eyes start popping out more and more. Their mouths start gaping. Finally, when the thing lands it is a huge monster. Not just Joe Mathews but row and row and row after row of people come out. They cannot believe this thing. They can not believe that this is what an airplane is. And you should hear the screams of delight. They say, "My God, this is an airplane? Can we go touch it?" After they see the landing, they say, "We want to see how it goes up again. Does it have any difficulty in going up?" I say, "Well it sometimes does. But most times it doesn't." And they stay to see the take off.

After they have had their fill of thrills seeing the airplane, we take them to the two five-star hotels, international standard hotels, which are very posh. They are thrilled with the swimming pool. "Why do people need to go in this pond?" Then they go to see the kitchen, how the modern kitchen works. But the biggest thrill is going up and down in the elevator. We take them time by time, group by group, up and down, up and down the elevator. And this kind of exposure is more than fun, they are getting exposed to another kind of life that has been hidden. You have to see it to believe it. Arangabad is a small town, not very highly developed. Maliwada is a representative of a very, very primitive village where there is a gap of at least two centuries. Before the Consult, they had heard of urban living, they had seen people carrying transistors, some had seen movies also, but they had not seen the impact of the 20th century. This is what that exposure does to them.

I want to tell you how we got the truck. It is one of the miracle events that have happened in the economic side of our guild work. Maliwada is basically farmers and farm laborers. "Mali" means gardener and "wada" means abode. Maliwada means "gardener's abode." The people have decided to have a farmers guild and about 150 people are part of that guild. They work with crop planning, rotational planting and all kinds of new methods of cropping patterns. A development crew went to Bombay and shared the story of Maliwada with one of the leading textile companies called the Bombay Dyeing Company. They said, "This is what is happening in Maliwada and we need all of this equipment." - not realizing that this company had so much equipment with them that they could give.

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The very young chairman of that company said, "Well, I have a tractor, I have a truck, I have a jeep, I have a well-blasting compressor unit, I have a motorcycle. Can you make use of these things?" We said, "Sure." He said, "Can you take the jeep right now and go back in it to Maliwada?" Early one morning three people came to Maliwada, very proudly announcing that they had brought a jeep from Bombay. The next day the tractor arrived. The same day the tractor driver went back to get the truck and on that truck was the compressor and the motorcycle. Within that week, Maliwada had all of that equipment. You should have seen the crowds that thronged to see it.

A consultant, during the Consult, went to International Harvester. After the Consult we went back to them and they also gave us a tractor plus training for six of our young men in tractor driving and tractor maintenance. Those two tractors plowed day and night, and did all the farmlands of Maliwada for the first time in history. For the first time in history, the farmers got together and decided that they wanted high yield crops, that they would sow hybrid crops. Again, we went to a business house, told them the story of Maliwada and they made arrangements so we could get the seeds within a matter of days. They were distributed and sown. And, for the the first time, they have fertilizers, pesticides.

On the industrial side, the Consult made a concrete plan of one small industry - a box factory - to make box cartons and supply them to the leading industry in Arangubad - Automobile Parts of India. API buys the crates, packs them, and sends them off to wherever they are needed - boxes made in Maliwada. Six young men, unemployed youth, were trained within a matter of weeks in carpentry methods and with three saws, a few hammers, and a box of nails, the box factory began. At first they produced fifteen boxes a week, then 25 boxes a week, fifty boxes a week, and last week we sent a hundred boxes to API. There are now about 20 youth employed and another industrial house has given us a gift of an industrial shed worth rp 75,000 which is going up. The box factory will now have 50 people and even greater production. API says they can take up to 150 or 200 boxes a week. Workmanship is good. The workers have really learned well and we have an electric saw that speeds up the matter.

I have learned that to initiate miracles you cannot be stopped by your situation. The lack of facilities does not stop you. You go on with whatever you have and you expand. I learned that in Maliwada.

There is another small industry that is also providing API with boxes. When our boys deliver boxes they see the other boxes also being loaded, filled with parts for shipment. They watch to see what will happen if the box breaks while you are there. One young person told this story: "There was this box, we knew it was not our box because it did not have our symbol, the Maliwada symbol on it. They threw it down and the whole thing collapsed. Then they threw another box. It was a Maliwada box and it stayed steady and solid." It is that kind of integrity and that kind of quality of work that is in them. They know that they have to do well whatever they do.

There are other companies that are coming forward. What used to be Burma Shell and is now Harlati Refinery came. They had seen the document and

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called our people in Bombay and said, "Now, tell me about this. We are fascinated by your book. It seems like it is a very good methodology. What you are doing is very good. How can we be of help?" Herdellia Chemicals is another company that has given us a cash gift. They said, "This is fine and we want to have more to do with you. We want our top 18 executives to go, in rotation, to Maliwada and live to see how these methods work." This is what is happening.

There are probably a lot of stories that I could tell, but there is one about the women in Maliwada. When we first went to Maliwada we could not drag a single woman out of the house. We couldn't, we simply couldn't. They saw us - strange looking women, men and foreigners. We were strange creatures to them. They went inside and hid in their houses. You couldn't drag them out. But after a week of chatting with them, having tea with them during the Consult, they began to come out - new women, emerging women. These days when you call one woman, fifteen come. You say, we need women representatives here and they come from all directions. I have learned in Maliwada that there will always be problems but nothing is impossible. You decide to do miracles and it becomes possible.

There is one woman that I especially like to hold up. The oldest woman in the village is 110 years old and sits at her doorstep or on the veranda every day and when you pass by, she always greets you. But it is her daughter-in-law I want to tell you about. She is 85-90 years old and all the time walks doubled over. One day she came to the house, her back was painning her, and asked if we could give her some medicine. We said, "Well, we can give you some tablets," but we knew she needed more attention. We had started getting visiting doctors in the clinic so I said, "Next time the doctor comes, you come and he will look at you." He examined her and suggested that she probably had a Vitamin B Complex deficiency and needed an injection. She got the injection on one side and said, "Doctor both sides hurt - not just one side. Why don't you give me an injection on both sides." Ever since that time she has started associating with us more. She has started coming to the Mahila Mandal which is the women's association in the afternoon, making peanut butter with us and having a good time. Gradually, one day, you saw that she no more walked doubled over. She is walking more and more erect, literally walking tall. Now she is in the infant school structures, part of the infant school staff.

It is not the social miracles, it is not the economic miracles, it is not what you have done with the farm or school or clinic or health care or community kitchen or nutrition. It's not what you've done with industry or farmers or hybrid seeds. It is what has happened to the people - people who have gotten their lives transformed. They are different people, changed people. They are people who no longer assume that they are village vokels. Of course they are uneducated, but they have a confidence, they have a pride, they have a hope in their own determination. They are a new people. This is what has happened in Maliwada, a new people has emerged - a new decision has emerged.

Corporate action, team work is the key. It is not what one person has done; it is not what two people have done; it is what everybody has done. It is the team, the corporate action that has happened in Maliwada. That is what villagers have seen.

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There is one man called Suryabban who is a farmer. He said that he is a "Krantikari" which means, "I am a revolutionary." He has told his family, "Don't come to me with your little problems. You handle them yourself. I am going to devote myself to this work, to the human development, to this Human Development Project - not just for Maliwada but for the sake of the whole world. If there is a crisis handle it. If you can't handle it, then let me hear about it. I am a revolutionary now." This is what has happened to the people.

Cynthia Elliott is a 17 year old girl from Denver, Colorado. She had just finished her school and before she could go to nursing training, she decided to come to Maliwada. That girl set up the whole clinic. She indentified herself with the local people. That girl loved the people and changed their lives - and had her life changed. She came for three months and went back to Bombay to extend her visa for three more months. When she finally had to leave, you should have seen the sendout. I have never seen the likes of that in my whole life. Old men, young men, children, the women - everybody came to send her out. Each guild had a sendout party for her. Everybody contributed a rupee or whatever to give her some gift. Not that it was a very big gift. There were stone baubles and silver bracelets, chains and rings that they gave her out of their love, because she showed her love. She identified with the people over there. The style that she portrayed was: "I am one with you although I am a white, I am an American, I am a westerner, although I am all of that, I know what it means to live in the situtation and move ahead." You should have seen the sendout. They decorated a bullock cart with flowers and coconut leaves and put up a big mattress on it. They said to her, "We are sending you out as a daughter. You are the daughter of the village. We are sending you out to find a husband. Go back to your country as our daughter, go to your father-in-laws place. You are our daughter." That is the kind of sendout that that girl had.

We have seen this happen, not just with Cynthia, but with other guardians, consultants, people like yourselves, who have come, who have changed the lives of the villagers and in turn had their own lives changed. We have seen it happen again and again and again.

Visitors come. Business tycoons come. About 10 days ago, a big textile owner came to Maliwada. If you were to rate him, his company is probably the fourth largest in India. He has that much status, that much money. When he came to visit the village, he went around to villager after villager, interviewed them, and came back and had a chat with us. He said, "I have always dreamed of doing this. But never could do it. Never could think of doing it. I have given people money, to help them, but what you are doing is fulfilling my desire."

Mr. Rajan from Hyderabad who is the Director of Water Development Society came and said, "All of my life I have dreamed of doing this. I am so glad that somebody is doing it. It needs to happen. We are so much involved in our administration, our beauracracy, our immediate problems, that where the need lies we cannot go. We are unable to go. What you are doing is what I have always wanted to do."

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One missionary who has been in India 30 years came to see us - an American missionary. He said, "This is what we missionaries yearn to do, but we never had the guts to do."

When guardians and consultants come they make an impact on the village and they are impacted. Our lives have changed. We the auxiliary, are no longer the same people - our lives have changed because of the decision of Maliwada. Human development has happened in Maliwada. The socio-economic development is taking place, but what has happened is the human development. A new people has emerged and it is a new people that are looking forward to replication with hope, with determination and with the decision to move ahead.