

### THE MIGHTY 250

This morning's collegium is about the second priority, called the "Mighty 250". I'd like to say a few things about the Mighty 250 going on in the state of Maharashtra in India. Although you have heard several things about it, this will be an attempt to paint for you a picture of what is happening in the divisional operations and the other things that go into bringing about the Mighty 250.

The official launching of the Mighty 250 took place at the Council which ended the fourth Training School in September. It was a very dramatic event. We decided we'd change the whole mood of the training school, which had been thinking about doing 25 projects. Everyone was geared toward doing 25 social demonstrations, so that the switch to 250 was something very jolting, and we wanted to make it a very dramatic event. It was decided that everybody would go out to the park which is in the shape of the Maharashtra grid at the entrance of the village and plant 232 flags in the earth, and this is what we did. We started the meeting and then it was announced that everybody would go out two by two, singing the Iron Man song. There were about 200 or 300 people walking two by two through the village to the entrance and they stood all around the Maharashtra grid; it was really like a human boundary to Maharashtra. Then the four division guns came into the centre and called out some of the people from their divisions and handed them flags. Within a matter of minutes the whole grid was filled with different coloured flags. This was a very dramatic event; it was also a very joyous happening. Behind all this joy and excitement, there was an awesomeness. You suddenly realized that they were all here - 250 villages had a new chance now, training or no training, school or no school, money or no money. That's how the launching of the "Mighty 250" began in the state of Maharashtra.

There are four things that I'd like to talk about: divisional operations, training and development, human development training school, and the spirit life. I know you've heard so many stories of what's happening in the villages, and to get inside of one of these divisions is something else. Maliwada is in the Aurangabad Division. What you have to do in Aurangabad is site selections; you take one person with you from the village and another person from another project in another district and the three of you go and find a village that you would select to be part of the Nava Gram Prayas. Usually the Division Guns are supposed to do the selection, but in the Aurangabad Division that hardly ever happens, as the guns always seem to be out doing authorization or funding. So it happens that Ian Gilmour has to do most or it. He picks up somebody from the village who has decided to be a caring one, and then they join up with someone else like Desmond Balm from Nadlapur, and they all go site selecting in another district. First they write letters to all the officials responsible for that area to make appointments. They arrive on the agreed date and ask for a government vehicle and they take some of the officials with them. Then they go around

touring as many villages as they can. In the villages they think might do, they go in and ask the people if they want to do it; if not they have to go out and do it all over again. For each site selection you have just two things to do, but you probably have to make several rounds before you decide on one village.

It was very interesting when all the support forces arrived in India. They were new to the country and new to the situation. They were still getting adjusted when all of a sudden six or eight people got into a bus and went into one site selection area so that all the division guns would get trained at one time in site selection. And in a matter of one day - one site selection - all the division guns were supposed to get trained - and they did. They selected one village and went on to the other divisions and began to do the same, that quickly.

After site selection we invite the people of the village to come and visit Maliwada. We were supposed to receive twenty villages, one after the other. But it so happened that a programme never was set, so you always had to be ready for them. One day there were eleven villages at the same time. You were cooking lunch at 11:00 and then you were cooking lunch at 11:30, and again and again. This was really a challenge for the people of Maliwada. It opened their eyes to see that they are really living on behalf of the other villages. They take the visitors on a tour around the village to see all the things called for in the document: the pre-school, the health clinic, the sukhi factory and the box factory, the state bank and the model village, everything we do in the project. And the Maliwada people handle everything, including the enablement. It was a great sign for the people of other villages to see how Maliwada people have picked up the responsibility. During the demonstration visit, one of the training school staff comes and talks to the people who are visiting and tells them what the school is all about, what it will be like to participate in the Nava Gram Prayas, and invites ten or fifteen people of their village to be part of the next training school. When we left Maliwada, about six or seven villages had already sent their people in, and we hope that all 20 villages are now represented in the training school.

While the training school is still going on, a one-day Gram Sabha (Town Meeting) is held in each of the villages where a project is going to be launched. That is always a very important event in the life of the village. All these events are now a divisional responsibility. Before, when we had only four villages to do and the whole continent available to teach, they could be assigned to go and do one Gram Sabha or one Consult. Now, these are a divisional responsibility. We site select divisionally, we do Gram Sabha divisionally, we do Consults divisionally.

Since our troops are so fresh, we have found it crucial to give them a one-day crash course on Gram Sabha. So we arrive in one location on the first day and all the people who are assigned to that Gram Sabha come and a training course is done for them; the next day they are on stage. It so

happens that one of the young men from Maliwada who was assigned to be in one of these Gram Sabhas had had just one training session in the auxiliary. The Gram Sabha happened immediately after that session, so there wasn't a chance to finish his training. And it was raining so much that the access to the place where the Gram Sabha training was to be held was flooded, so we went directly to the Gram Sabha without doing the training. So here was this young man saying, "Oh, I will take two workshops!" It's that kind of story that shows how the people pick up the responsibility.

The next step is that the training school ends and the auxiliaries are assigned and they make their entrance into the village. There are six or seven people, sometimes only four. And then you have the job of getting ready for the consult. The consult is also done on a shoestring budget. We send people with 200 rupees (\$US 23) in their pocket and we say, "Go set up the consult." What we're telling them is to in-kind everything possible. Since the last set of consults we had, we had to do the Shivni village in the Aurangabad Division. There were six in the auxiliary. They were all living in one room which was very damp. They were cooking there, and living there. It was so open. All around there were children looking in, and men just squatting and staring at you whether you were cooking or writing or sleeping or anything. They had to make a makeshift latrine at the back of the village. So when they had to go to the latrine, a whole flock of people would follow. It's quite a job to get the whole community moving together, because you have rich landholders and a lot of other people, and you have the caste system there, so getting everyone into one community is quite a task. What you do is some miracles to get the people of the village together. This is what the people of Shivni village did. They straightened up the road and tried to make it more presentable. But by the time the consult arrived, it had rained so much that all their efforts were washed away. So the road was all full of rocks and slush again; even a jeep couldn't come in. It was so bad that the district officials got stranded and couldn't make it. So it was under these circumstances that the Shivni consult happened.

The great thing was that most of the food was in-kind in the village. There is no rice, as they do not grow it; they grow sorghum. So they collected a lot of jowar (sorghum) and took it to the city and sold it and bought the rice and lentils and other things needed for cooking with that money. Then they in-kind most of the vegetables and potatoes and onions, so much that the whole consult was done without spending one peisa, through in-kind and local resources. You have to be creative. You have to have patience to do that. And you see all of these fresh auxiliaries who really have no context, except for what they've seen the Maliwada people do. They go and do that great sign, even though they've not had programme money or stipends, they just keep at it and get everything done. It's really a great sign and a significant thing to know that the Mighty 250 will happen if this kind of perseverance goes on. This is what happens in a division.

And then another aspect of division operations is monitoring. The Division Guns go around and see how the projects are faring. It's not really checking on how well people are doing, it's really a morale boost to the auxiliary. Keith Robinson was saying that while he was out site selecting Joe Slicker and Vinod Parekh came monitoring to his village, Ambadi. He had not known that they were going to visit and was really surprised when he came back and the auxiliary said, "Oh, you don't know what happened. We had a monitoring team here!" They were in great spirits. So, what this monitoring team does is to give them the nurture and spiritual rejuvenation that they need; it gets them going all over again. Then, of course, it gives them a few hints of how the project is going, as the objective outside presence, and works with them on what should be the next step. So, monitoring is a very important aspect of divisional operations.

To coordinate all this, we have the Project Directors' meetings, which take place every two weeks. Every two weeks the Project Directors, the Division Guns, the support forces and people from the villages come together in one location (so far it's been either Maliwada or Bombay). They come with such incredible stories of what has happened in those two weeks and you see that each project has gone miles ahead. It looks like six weeks of work have been done every two weeks. These meetings are a way of rebuilding the vision and giving some very practical hints as to how the projects should go, like getting some people who have been reading about useful schemes to give information on what new resources and information are available. It's like you come together and exchange experiences and you hear something new that will move your project into a very fast orbit once again. This happened with the dairy scheme that was studied very intensively for Maliwada. Once it was studied it was made available to all the villages. Those are the things that happen during Project Directors' meetings.

Another thing that is happening now is acceleration. We are still locating information, finding resources. But what little has been done is going to be very, very crucial for all the projects. Bob and Sandra True have done a tremendous job in locating avenues and resources and bringing them to Maliwada for the people to see the kind of job that is going on and making those sources available to all the projects. Acceleration is going to play a very key role. At the moment, we have a combination type of acceleration trek going, but we are hopeful that very soon we'll have industrial treks, agricultural treks, health treks and educational treks, which will push the projects tremendously.

I don't want to take much time on training and development, but to say that they are going very well. I'm sure that Bob Rafos and Neil Vance have shared what happened in India. They really helped in opening a lot of avenues for us there. And yesterday, Mr. Bajaj, one of the big industrialists in India, took a busload of people to visit the projects. Things like this are happening every day. People are doing things; development is taking place; one source leads to another. So training and development are going

very well. So is the Human Development Training School, which is really the key to the Mighty 250. It's like a manufacturing machine for the troops. How, in just barely two months, can you take raw people and fill them full of vision, practical knowledge, and training, and make them into the character they need to be to be the auxiliary. I'm sure you have heard some of how they operate in the Human Development Training School. They have practical training modules; there are nine modules, based on the 9 arenas of the 36 Programmes Chart. And with that, the auxiliaries feel that they are equipped to go into a village and do a project. It's not that they've become agricultural, industrial, commercial or living environment experts. But they know that if they go and tap the right resources that there is agricultural expertise available and industrial expertise, etc., so that they can get the job done. The module teaches them "what is agriculture", "what is industry" and how to get it done. And that is very important to the training school.

Lastly, I would like to say something on the spirit life. I was hoping that one of us would have the new ritual that we all use now. It's a very meaningful ritual now and I'm sure when we meet next summer we'll have the opportunity to look at it and probably see how it could be improved. But the way it is now, it seems fairly adequate. The singing is there and it is taken from the poetry of Tagore. It is amazing how close it is to Christian theology. Then we have readings which are also from Tagore. And then, at breakfast we have a reading and a conversation. It's all in English now, and I think that's good, because we need to tell ourselves that English is a global language, and if we are part of a global outfit, then we have to be understood by everybody. The songs and conversations are a very key part of our spirit life. You heard Donna McCleskey say that our people love singing the "Hey, Delta Pace" song. And they are very good at composing songs. They just go on composing songs, one after another. It's this building of corporateness and building of spiritual nurture that everybody needs - and the conversations, too. For our Ecclesiola dynamic, we, at least in Maliwada, have started to do it in a very sophisticated way now. We have good decor and have begun to do culture celebrations. The first time we did one on Australia. We had a map of Australia, Oombulgurri decor and Australian food and folk singing. Phil Dowsett was the star. He sang a beautiful folk song. We then have a conversation on being a general - on maneuvering, strategy and all those things that make a good general.

So, the "Mighty 250", based on a few things like that, has great hope. The people of Maliwada sent a letter to Lyn when they heard about Joe's death. What they said in the letter I think was very key, not just because of the event, but because of what social demonstration is and what happens to a people when awakenment happens. And the Mighty 250 is nothing but awakenment and engagement. That letter said that Joe was like a sun to them (Maliwada has a symbol of the fort and the sun rising over it) because he came and brought the light of awakenment to the village. Now

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the sun has set, but that does not mean that the glow and the light that the sun gave will ever end, because the awakenment has happened, because the people are aware. They know their responsibility towards Nava Gram Prayas, and towards sharing that awakenment with others. And I think if we keep it at the back of our minds that the Mighty 250 (or whatever we are doing) is nothing but awakenment and engagement, whether we are developing people of the 85% or of the 15% or of the bureaucracy, whoever it is, then I think from 250 by the time next year comes, we'll be ready for a much bigger number.