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## RETHINKING ON PRAYAS

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Each time, every year, and on every occasion when we are about to get into a new initiative, we pause to think and, invariably, we decide to stop our further growth in terms of new projects. Somehow, this never happens. We had indeed decided during the previous years, too, that we would not add to our numbers and, instead, utilize our resources, opportunity and space to expand ourselves to tackle the problems in larger perspective. Although, this year, we have made significant inroads in the realm of policy formulations and have exercised some influence at the national level, we have not ceased to grow at the grassroots. This is perhaps happening to us, because, despite all our promises, we are unable to forget our basic commitment to respond to the basic needs of the children. On introspection, we come to an inevitable conclusion that our very existence is justified for one reason - that we serve those who need us. We never turn a blind eye to individuals or initiatives that come to us for support.

On the solemn Republic Day this year the most devastating earthquake in Gujarat left us with no choice, particularly when a senior and thoughtful Govt. functionary himself invited us to go there. We had heard about the NGO movement and the pride of Gujarat, and were dissuaded by many. When our team went to Gujarat and worked against tremendous odds, sharing the raw pain of our brethren, they also faced multiple obstacles coming naturally to those without roots. What they have done during the past 6 months is, perhaps, the most brilliant feat by Prayas. Our team has not only won the confidence of the local people, they have also been able to set themselves up in 7 completely destroyed villages. Thanks to the local Govt., Prime Minister's Relief Fund & Action Aid, we are now well - entrenched with larger coverage.

In the previous year, Prayas took the initiative to add another project - Crisis Intervention Centres, in all 9 districts of Delhi with the help of Delhi Police, Delhi Commission for Women and Central Social Welfare Board. This experiment of joint investigation by the police and the social workers with the assistance of legal and medical experts, in the cases of child rape & abuse, is being considered a pioneering effort. While seriously getting into the area of trafficking in women and children, we have once again realised the importance of working with abused children, particularly girls. Despite our decision to stop further growth, it again appears that we are all set for some more concrete initiatives in this area having crying need of holistic projects.

In this decision of our Governing Body not to grow further, we had not realised that in our original partnership with Delhi Police, Delhi School of Social Work and Shramik Vidyapeeth, there was a seed germinating for a distant Prayas project - Jan Shikshan Sansthan (Institute of People's Education). We always felt very strongly that for the neglected and disadvantaged children, the ideal package consisted of non-formal education, vocational training and the protective umbrella of care and protection. A major part of the Prayas vocational training was, in fact, organised by Shramik Vidyapeeth, now renamed JSS, which has been given a major thrust through National Literacy Mission, by the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India. We proudly accepted this project, being one of the 20 major NGOs in the country and the only one in the city-state of Delhi, and created a separate Society to run the same. Jan Shikshan Sansthan is the natural culmination of Shramik Vidyapeeth and, perhaps, a project directly emanating from the Prayas vision. In just about one year, JSS has grown into a powerful organization and we are all set to create some impact on the Alternative Education Scene in Delhi combining the same with the Open School and our innovative model of Non-Formal Education.

