



Vikasa Tharangini

A news update of Bala Vikasa

PARTNERSHIP: HOLLOW WORD OR POSITIVE REALITY?

In the field of development and cooperation between governments, institutions and voluntary organizations, the notion of partnership is often time mentioned as a key element.

Governments realizing that they need the voluntary sector to get in touch with the people at the grassroots insist of linking with the voluntary sector to implement their programs. At the institutional level, the formal banking system, for instance, expresses its desire to collaborate with NGOs in view of establishing banking networks in rural areas. In all these cases, partnership is the word used to qualify this relationship between them and the NGO sector.

Abundantly used in India, the concept of partnership is also profusely utilized everywhere in the world, especially in the sphere of international cooperation.

3) Finally, real partnership works in complementarity: one partner complementing the other in the pursuance of the goals jointly identified.



Authentic partnership is possible! In its more than ten years of existence, Bala Vikasa is experimenting such a relationship with SOPAR, its Canadian counterpart. Same foundress, same philosophy of development for sustainability and self-reliance, same management values based on transparency and accountability, same desire to build a strong and vibrant civil society in India and Canada, Bala

Vikasa and SOPAR are two sides of the same coin.

Recently, this active partnership was demonstrated on the occasion of events related to SOPAR 25th anniversary. Last October, a delegation of 15 Canadian members of SOPAR visited Bala Vikasa and saw for themselves the work accomplished in Andhra Pradesh for the benefit of the poor. In November, a BV team of 5 persons lead by its President criss-crossed Canada sharing with the Canadian population in friendship and solidarity.

This issue of Tharangini gives witness to these two events: tangible symbols of a true and fulfilling partnership. □

What about this type of partnership? From experience, we conclude that in the majority of the cases, the relationship between governments, institutions and voluntary sector is a subtle travesty of what is a real partnership. In this relationship, NGOs are often manipulated to serve those in a position of strength as long as it fits their purpose. Partnership here is a hollow word.

Can it be otherwise when we consider the ingredients needed for a genuine partnership ?

- 1) True partnership is based on communality of values and approach on life.
- 2) Partners should be equal without one feeling dominant or dominated by the other.

Contents	Page
□ Partnership	1
□ Highlights of a Canadian Diary	2
□ Interview with Lilly Mary	3
□ Sr. Joyce in Canada	4
□ A Canadian School Director in India	4
□ News brief from BV	4

CANADIANS IN INDIA

Highlights of a Diary

15 Canadians visited Bala Vikasa in the last week of October 2003. The team included the Vice-President and the Director of SOPAR and many donors. Their visit provided a lot of enriched feeling to Bala Vikasa and contributed to foster partnership between both organizations.

Vikasa Day Training: (Regular monthly women group meeting) The Canadian team was very impressed by the women groups. All the women were so well disciplined as they participated patiently in the meeting for so long. The team realized the enthusiasm and interest of the women in learning extensively.

Micro-enterprise (Vikasa loan beneficiaries): After interviewing a few beneficiaries, the Canadian delegation could see that Bala Vikasa women are able to manage well different small scale businesses for their livelihood. They are trained well about the importance of savings and payments for the welfare of their family. The Canadians congratulated the women for their hard work.

Visit to Lilly Mary's house: On the occasion of Sopar Silver Jubilee,

Bala Vikasa planned to bring to Canada Lilly Mary, a woman group leader to represent the 80,000 women of Bala Vikasa. In view of this, Bala Vikasa organized a visit to Lilly Mary's house, situated in Prakashreddypeta. That day, it was raining "cats and dogs". Since the house was very small, the Canadians split into batches to enter the house. It was wet everywhere, as the roof of the hut was leaking. The Canadians saw the single room with small

partitions for cooking, storage, beedi making and sleeping place. They saw the shelf that was bought by Lilly Mary with the money, saved in Bala Vikasa. The team met her husband and children.

Leaders training: 250 women group leaders of Subedari area in Warangal District came for the training. The Canadian team was invited to interact with the women. Courageously, many women came forward to share their experience and explain the change in their lives after joining BV. At the end, Canadians were called to join a dance.

Orphans' gathering: The Canadians took part in a gathering of orphan children from near by areas. During the meeting, Bala Vikasa coordinators made the children feel at home by interacting with them, by making them sing and dance, by asking them about their life ambitions and by providing them food, clothes and gifts. The whole atmosphere of



The members & donors of SOPAR among the BV women leaders

the gathering was very sad but at the same time filled with happiness. At one point, a child was called on to the stage to tell about her parents. As she remembered them, she started to cry. The whole assembly also burst out in tears.

Gangadevapalli (a model village) 10th anniversary celebrations of water tank: This visit is unforgettable! The Canadian delegation was expected by 3 pm.

However delayed by a heavy schedule, the team reached the village at 4.30 pm. The whole day it rained heavily. Despite this, the villagers waited patiently with music, garlands, badges, and "bottu". The delegation was taken to a stage covered by a tent, which was all leaking. The visitors were engaged with dances, songs and speeches. The people were proud to show their village as a model and to explain how it developed with the help of Bala Vikasa. During the entire function people were very disciplined.

The Canadians appreciated the unity of the people and their heartfelt welcome.

WID-Coordinators training at PDMC: The Canadian delegation met 260 Women Program coordinators who came to Bala Vikasa for their regular training. With these women the Canadians had a serious sharing session on the culture, habits, marriage, man-woman relationship and dowry.

Bala Vikasa Water Programs: The Canadians visited few bore-wells which were financed personally by some of them. They felt great to have a first hand appreciation of what a little financial support can contribute. On this occasion, the Canadian team interacted with village women and many other beneficiaries and learned more about their life and their daily struggle for the welfare of their families.

Before leaving, the Canadian delegation expressed their heartfelt appreciation for the schedule that had been prepared by Bala Vikasa team. This sojourn had been an eye opener for each one of them. They expressed their admiration for the dedicated staff of Bala Vikasa and for the Indian populations so determined for self-reliance and courageous in their daily struggle. The Canadian team brings with them a feeling of satisfaction of being part of a people development process, that is strong and vibrant. □

INTERVIEW WITH Mrs. LILLY MARY

For the recently held celebrations of Silver Jubilee of SOPAR in Canada, Mrs. Lilly Mary represented the women of the BV Women Program along with the Founders, BV President Mgr.Thumma Bala, the Director of BV, Fr. Balashowry and Sr.Joyce one of the coordinators of the Women Program.

Recently, Tharangini visited and interviewed Lilly Mary on her visit to Canada.

How was your experience touring Canada?

It was very good! All the Canadian friends took care of us very well. One of the Canadian donors, Mr. E. Tassé, provided us with warm clothes and comfortable guesthouse to stay.

What did you share with those in Canada?

I told them that it was not only Lilly Mary who was in front of them but the 80 000 poor women regrouped by Bala Vikasa under Balakka leadership and guidance. Because of Bala Vikasa today we are able to have two square meals a day. Our sufferings have been reduced. The saving and credit has improved our poverty-stricken life. With the experience of solidarity, we are able to treat well the aged and the orphan children of our villages.

As a representative of BV women, how do you feel of the tour?

I feel that the tour was a great opportunity to share with the Canadians on my life with its joys and sorrows: the relationship of the women with their husbands; our many hungry nights before joining Bala Vikasa; the injustice that the women are often going through in their community; in the fact at present that even the Corporators approach us to solve the community problems.

What do you share with your fellow BV women after your visit?

“As a poor woman were you scared to speak with the Canadians?” This is

one of the many questions that my friends asked me. I was able to do so because I went on behalf of all BV women. The credit goes to them. The type of works - beedi-making - that we do here I did there and showed to the Canadians.

What do you have to say about SOPAR and the Canadian donors?

We talked with the staff of SOPAR and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).I saw in their offices the photos of the bore-wells, which Bala Vikasa has built in our villages. We visited schools, churches and religious sisters' houses. To all the people I met, I told them about the tremendous change in us after joining BV.The Canadians, I think appreciated the courage and brightness in my eyes. I also shared with them that we, BV women contribute in our own way to support the orphan children of our villages.

In one of the schools, where Mrs. Claire Maccauley, Vice President of SOPAR, took us, the children asked me so many questions: why do you have a “bottu” on your forehead? Why are you wearing a sari? Is the income from the beedi rolling sufficient (RS.30 per day) for your family? When they heard me telling how the bore-wells benefit so many people, the children promised us to raise more funds for many more bore-wells.

As a woman, how do you look at the Indian poor women after your visit?

Here in India, we still have a lot of differences between rich and poor, caste and creed. It seems that there is more unity and solidarity among the Canadian friends. In a similar way, I feel that all our women also should be united. Marriages should

take place without dowries. Husbands should not inflict sufferings on their wives.Solidarity is not yet visible in our society. My prayer to God is that our men and women also inculcate the qualities of equality and mutual-respect.

What do you like the most during your visit?



The BV representatives in Canada on the occasion of SOPAR Silver Jubilee

All the friends in Canada respected and took care of me as I am. I liked it the most in our visit. We should also maintain such human respect as it is found there.

Do you like to share anything with the readers of Tharangini?

I only wish to convey my heart-filled gratitude and wishes to all the friends in Canada through Vikasa Tharangini. My visit to Canada was a great experience that I will preserve for future and share with my fellow women. □

Sr. JOYCE IN CANADA

As I recall my trip to Canada it was a memorable experience for me, which I will cherish ever in my life.

The journey to overseas was an eye opening to me for a wider learning. I appreciate the well-organized and systematic programs of SOPAR and the people who render their tireless services for the development of the poor people in A. P., especially the women and children. I was surprised

to know how much the people in Canada were interested to know about the situation of the poor in A.P.

At the same time I feel very happy and contended when I saw the happiness, surprise and appreciation from the donors as they came to know the successful functioning of Bala Vikasa in India. I observed that all were very much satisfied at their valuable contributions reaching the poor. They promised their increased assistance.

It was a special privilege to interact with everyone there. Though the climate was very cold, snowy and rainy, we did not have any difficulty, as we were sufficiently kept warm by their attention, love and concern.

Thank you all at Bala Vikasa and SOPAR for this wonderful trip. □

Sr. Joyce, AC, Vijayanagaram

A CANADIAN SCHOOL DIRECTOR IN INDIA

Last year my husband and I had the great pleasure of visiting Bala Vikasa on the 25th anniversary of the founding of SOPAR.

We found there great people and

incredible projects which are successful beyond our expectations.

The clean drinking water program which got us involved with SOPAR through my school showed us the practical proof of how we can help. It was very emotional for me to see in the heart of India the name of my school: "École Mont Bleu".



Sr. Joyce and Mrs. Lilly Mary with the school children in Canada

The women program was the largest and most impressive as it encompassed so many activities. The training center is so active and flourishing that surprised and fascinated us.



The SOPAR members with the beneficiaries of the water prog.

The other programs we visited showed us a very professional approach and well-run organization, keeping its eye always on the basic aim of the common goal; "helping people to help themselves".

The visits to the primary or high schools were very interesting to these long-experienced educators. The generous receptions we had everywhere were greatly appreciated.

We were highly impressed by that great "Lady of Energy" Bala Theresa – the foundress of SOPAR and Bala Vikasa. To see her in action is a

source of enlightenment. She is definitely the "soul" of Bala Vikasa and an inspiration to all the people she meets.

Overall the visit to BV was an eye-opener for all the Canadians on the trip and especially for me as Vice President of SOPAR and my husband. It served to redouble our resolve to "help those people to help themselves". It was an unforgettable visit and it will live in our memories for ever. □

Mr. Dan and Mrs. Claire Macauley

News brief from BalaVikasa

Taking charge by the new Director

The celebration of thanking the outgoing Director, Fr. Balashowry and welcoming the new Director, Fr. Rayappa took place on the 31st December, 2003.

News from Women Program

1020 BV women leaders who are illiterate have attended BV's 3 months literacy course and are on their headway to literacy.

About 3500 BV women have become the policy holders of Govt. Life Insurance. Through the policy 842 children of those women have got the school scholarship. This initiative from BV has strongly encouraged women to send their children to schools.

In January 2004 the women program management in a few areas was handed over to a few partner organizations, sustaining the cooperation through the network of BV FORWARD. It multiplies the BV reach to the rural women, while strengthening the partner organizations. □



Bala Vikasa

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