

The distance charity ca

The efforts of a welfare *Society*
organisation which caters to *The News*
poor children in Rawalpindi are *3.3.02*
praiseworthy, but can such groups
bring change on their own?

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In 1994, when Mrs Yasmeen Farouqi launched her Better Tomorrow organisation to teach the poor children around Chaklala area in Rawalpindi, her family funded the first three schools. In March 1998, the organisation was registered under the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Ordinance 1961. An industrial home was added later which now employs ten regular workers and produces clothes. While the industrial home is a business venture the schools still operate as charitable institutions.

The organisation now runs a nursery and a primary school in Dhok Chandhrian, a place near Chaklala Scheme 3, which have 150 children each. Then there is a new primary school in the same area with 240 students. There is a fourth primary school

in Dhok Kashmirian with 100 students on its roll.

The new primary school was launched in April 2001 and has been aided by the Trust for Voluntary Organisations (TVO). But here too the Better Tomorrow did incur most of the costs.

The medium of teaching in these schools is Urdu and the children do pay a tuition fee ranging between Rs. 23. to Rs. 50 per month. The uniform is given to them on concessional rates. The teachers make between Rs. 600 to Rs. 800 per month.

In one of the schools I visited the headmistress drew Rs.1,500 per month. In the school aided by the TVO, however, the pay of the teachers ranges between Rs. 800 to Rs. 3000 per month.

The schools provide a service which the government is supposed to but does not. They are

not entirely free but they are quite cheap and parents are keen to get their children enrolled here. The teachers here get a lower salary than teachers in government schools but then there are hardly any government schools in the area to employ them. In any case many of them might not even qualify to be employed in a government school though one knows how poor the standards of the latter tend to be.

The question is not whether this is enough. The question is can any welfare organisation actually bring about a real change? Can the welfare organisations ensure a 'better tomorrow' on their own?

The philosophy of charity is radically opposed to the philosophy of social justice through peaceful change. Charity accepts the prevalent system of the distribution of wealth and power. As the system produces its own casualties — the poor, the powerless, the distressed — it gives them some relief. The relief is not given as a right but as a favour. This helps to ease the conscience of the rich who feel that they are very nice people who have done something for the poor. There is no denying the fact that those who start these schemes are either sensitive and concerned people or egocentric



Better Tomorrow for these children

and power hungry people. Even if they are sensitive and genuinely humane (i.e saints), they are not revolutionaries and, therefore, are often opposed to any radical changes in it. That is why the rich do not oppose them. After all saints do not necessarily say that the system is wrong. They do not necessarily threaten the rich. They may be mere dogooders who want to help the poor, making both the poor and the rich feel happy.

As for the poor, they too have internalised the values of the prevalent system. Thus they too feel grateful for the charity they get. They too feel that poverty is their luck (*kismet*) and that there are saintly people who help the poor anyway. This makes

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Children around Chaklala.

them reconcile to the system and not to oppose it. Thus charity helps to perpetuate injustice and inequality; it legitimises that degree of poverty which entitles some people to give charity and others to receive it.

Moreover, the new wave of charitable organisations and NGOs have given the state the opportunity to abscond from the social sector. The state actively promotes the NGO philosophy that communities should help themselves. The NGOs will provide them with initial funds and skills but basically they must pay for the services they want. This eventually means that the state will save money on opening new schools, providing free medicine, clean drinking water, housing

and so on. The private sector will take over and only a very small fraction of it will be philanthropic. The rest of it will simply fleece the people as it is already doing.

Does this mean we should not approve of charity? No. We must appreciate the fact that some people, because they feel the pain of others, put in money and efforts to help the poor. Even if done for enhancing one's power or securing glory, it is a good thing as whatever one's motives, it does help the poor in the short run.

However, while praising work by philanthropists and welfare organisations as short-term measures, one must make the point that they are not the answer to poverty. One must not allow the society to become complacent in the knowledge that Abdul Sattar Edhi's ambulances will pick up the sick and the wounded. One must keep striving to change the system so that a welfare state is created. This means among other things putting pressure on the state to create a wage structure which abolishes poverty. Moreover, it means creating a taxation system which abolishes excessive wealth. And, above all, it means providing a system where services are available to everyone in the whole country free and as a right not as charity.

by MASROOF GHANI which leads to the conclusion that it is only he who works. This is a different kind of reasoning by which I have proved that no one works at all, not even I! You look skeptical, dear reader. Here, I'll demonstrate how.

First, let me eliminate the normal inescapable activities of all human beings during the 365 days of the year. At the top of the list is sleep. You can perhaps go a couple of days without water and probably ten days without food in an emergency but it is doubtful if you could survive more than two or three days without sleep. So allowing eight hours a day for sleep, that works out to 2920 hours a year (365×8). That makes 122 days.

The next vital activity is that of eating. Allowing half an hour for each of 3 meals, we spend an hour and a half in eating, that accounts for 365×1.5 hours = 547.5 hours = 22.8 days in the year.

There are several other activities that consume 1.5 hours daily. These fall roughly into 4 groups. (1) bathing, washing, toilet, dressing, changing (2) travelling (3) sports, games, recreation, writing letters, reading newspapers (4) yawning, gazing at the ceiling, scolding the kids, shooing off beggars and detergent sales girls. These 4 groups take away 91.2 days of the years.

Then — assuming we are all nimazis — I allow 1 hour daily for the 5 canonical prayers, which accounts for 365 hours