

## **THE CUDDALORE EXPERIENCE**

Cuddalore in Tamilnadu is always prone to natural disasters of one kind or the other. The frequent occurrence of disasters set back the district's ability to cope using its resources. In 2004, the district experienced a severe drought in summer, floods in October and the tsunami in 26 December. The effect of tsunami was intense though the spread was small.

The terrible tragedy scarred the lives of over 97,000. 618 villagers lost life in a matter of minutes. Livestock loss was 29 lakh. 517.7 hectares of land was rendered saline. A property worth nearly 300 crore was destroyed.

The immediate task in disaster management in Cuddalore was that of rescue and relief. The first thing done was to arrange for a public announcement system. This helped in streamlining the rescue and relief operations and reducing the confusion at the hospitals. A search for the dead and the injured was initiated and public information centres were set up to provide available information. Food and water were provided to 24,000 evacuees with the help of volunteers and philanthropic agencies. Rice was taken from ration shops and various philanthropic agencies got it cooked. The dead bodies of 618 persons were individually photographed for identification and given mass burial. This helped in preventing the outbreak of diseases and in ensuring faster and smoother relief operations.

Most of the relief camps were located in wedding halls. Thirty-eight such centres were set up for the sake of refugees. With perfect co-ordination between authorities and voluntary agencies, food and water were provided to the refugees. Sanitary workers were appointed to clean the places on a daily basis and their works were constantly monitored. Medical camps were set up. Cooked food was monitored as a precautionary measure. Sintex tanks were set up to ensure the steady supply of water.

Immediate steps were taken to restore civic amenities like power and water supply. With the support of NGOs three desalination plants based on reverse osmosis were set up as the tsunami made the drinking water sources saline. 107 bore-wells were dug and pipelines were provided to ensure water supply to all the temporary shelters. Intensive police patrolling was introduced to prevent thefts and any untoward happenings.

Control rooms were set up to ensure speedy communication of problems and solutions. HAM radio operators helped in this process. Top officials were provided with mobile phones which helped to tackle SOS calls.

As many as 51 habitations were reduced to a rubble by the tsunami. Urgent cleaning was necessary to prevent epidemics. Therefore army personnel were pressed into service and within a few days mass cleaning was completed. The relief centres and villages were disinfected with bleaching powder, lime and phenyl.

7085 people were fed in 23 community kitchens across the district for over a month. Officers in charge were asked to provide a daily report of provisions required for the next day so as to ensure that the food supply was never disrupted.

An inventory of all donated relief materials was computerized to ensure equitable distribution. Donors were given acknowledgments. Coupon system was evolved for distribution of relief materials. Doctors and medicines were channelized through one department of health.

Twenty three teams of doctors comprising both government and private did wonderful service. 80,117 people were given medical attention. 437 people were treated as in-patients. 9,373 doses of vaccines were given. 17,000 typhoid vaccines were mobilised through the voluntary sector. Training was given to volunteers to counsel mentally traumatized people. A temporary camp was set up in one of the villages for this purpose.

Agricultural land to the extent of 517.7 hectares was rendered saline. Tests conducted with the help of mobile testing centres estimated that the salinity was to the extent of ninety centimetres to one metre in depth. Eco-friendly technologies were used to facilitate faster reclamation. The farmers were given enhanced compensation.

Animals were left stranded in the villages in the disaster. There were unattended dead animals also. Carcasses were disposed and 20,109 animals were vaccinated. To minimise bogus claims of beneficiaries of livestock loss, the distribution of relief cheques was done in consultation with veterinary inspectors and insurance papers at insurance offices.

Traumatized children were provided parks and play therapy was given to children by trained volunteers. Special homes were opened for tsunami affected children for psychological well being. It helped to prevent child trafficking and other forms of abuse. Schools and colleges where these children could go to were identified and immediate steps were taken to reopen the schools. Students were provided with books and bags as well.

To restore normalcy and to shut down the relief centres a large number of temporary shelters were put up with the help of the voluntary bodies and the Rural Development Department. Based on the feedback from the field, the design of these shelters was continuously improved. A lot of thrust was placed on the flooring and the controlling of heat. The sanitation needs of the rehabilitated were met with the help of voluntary agencies.

Thus the administration of Cuddalore undertook effective rescue and relief operations following the tsunami of December 2004.

## AMARTYA KUMAR SEN

Amartya Kumar Sen the Nobel Laureate in Economics was born to Amita and Ashutosh Sen on 3 November 1933. He was christened 'Amartya' by the first Nobel Laureate Rabinndranath Tagore. Amartya Kumar Sen's education began in St. Gregory's School, Dhaka. He soon moved to Shantinikethan of Rabindranath Tagore. It was here that at a very young age, Amartya Kumar Sen decided to become a teacher and a researcher. During his early days, he studied subjects like Sanskrit, Mathematics, and Physics, but he soon settled down for the eccentric charm of Economics. He was greatly influenced by the cultural diversity in the world as reflected in the curriculum of Shantinikethan.

During his teenage days in the mid-1940's, Amartya had experienced the shift from a united people to a sectarian society of Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh communities. These along with the murder of a poor muslim, Khadir Mia of Dhaka at the hand of his rivals formed the basis of Amartya Sen's research and analysis in Economics. He realized the dangers of narrowly defined identities, divisiveness and economic uncertainty. It also alerted in him a remarkable fact that economic uncertainty, in the form of extreme poverty could make a person a helpless pray to the violations of other kinds of freedom.

During the days in Presidency collage, Calcutta, Amartya formed an attitude on cultural identity, plurality, absorption, equity and universal tolerance. Though Sen did not have any political interest, the quality of sympathy and egalitarian commitment of the 'left' appealed him. In order to broaden his political vision, he involved himself in running evening schools for illiterate rural children in the neighbouring schools. He realized the need of education for systematic political broadening and social enlargement. The Bengal famine of 1943 in which three million landless rural labours were killed confirmed his economic and social philosophy.

In 1953 Amartya Sen went to Trinity College, Cambridge to study and enrolled for another B.A Degree in pure Economics. At the end of the First year he came back to India to do his Ph.D thesis under the supervision of the famous Economics methodologist A.K. Dasgupta of Banaras Hindu University. While Ph.D thesis was maturing Amartya Sen submitted it for a competitive Prize Fellowship at Trinity College. He got elected into it and went back to Cambridge. This Fellowship gave him four years of freedom. Since Economics was closely related to philosophical disciplines he spent four years studying Philosophy.

Amartya Sen joined the Delhi School of Economics in 1963 as a Professor and started working on Social choice Theory. The Social Choice Theory related to aggregation in economics assessment and policy making. He elaborated this theory in his book, "Collective Choice and Social Welfare." Later he shifted from pure theory of social choice to more practical problems. This was essential to assess poverty, inequality, deprivation, distribution of national income, unemployment, violation of personal liberties and basic right, gender disparities and

women's disadvantages. His studies were published in two collections namely, "Choice, Welfare, Measurement and Resources, Values and Development.

Amartya Sen shifted to America in 1985 and started analysing the implications of Welfare economics and political philosophy. He declared that welfare economics dealt with assessment of how well things were going for the members of society. If things were not well, there should be a justification for that. He had a particular interest in the poorest members of the society. By combining the tools of economics and philosophy, he lent an ethical dimension to economic studies.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awarded him the Nobel Prize for Economics in October 1998. He used a part of the prize money to run his Pratichi Trust which did social and charity work in the field of literacy, healthcare and gender equality. It was a passion he had had since the days when he was involved in running evening schools in surrounding villages when he was studying in Shanthinikethan fifty years ago.

He was also awarded many distinctions. He received the Indira Gandhi Gold Medal Award of the Asiatic Society in 1994, and Eisenhower Medal , USA and Honorary Companion of Honour, UK, for the year 2000. In 2012 he became the the 1<sup>st</sup> non-American recipient of the National Humanities Medal. He is the 1<sup>st</sup> Indian and the 1<sup>st</sup> Asian academician to head an Oxbridge college. He published more than 20 books and his books has been translated into more than 30 languages over a period of 40 years.

He has been called the "Conscience and the Mother Teresa of Economics" for his work on famine, human development theory, welfare economics, the underlying mechanism of poverty, gender inequality and political liberalism. However he denies the comparison of Mother Teresa by saying that he has never tried to follow a life style of dedicated self sacrifice. But it is to be accepted that he has spent a life time fighting poverty with analysis rather than activism. His ideas have had a global impact. He continues his work and academic teaching as Master, Trinity College, Cambridge, UK.