

Navsari Assets Project

Koli Patels in Navsari as a community owns 4 properties in Navsari. All these properties were purchased by our forefathers who migrated to South Africa and in the 1st and 2nd decade of 20th century. Their intention was to help the Koli Patel community of Navsari (Surat) District at the time to develop these properties for educational and cultural purposes so that the community may raise its living standard and raise its social status.

The 4 Properties are:

Koli Ashram	Nutan Society Land	Chhapra Road Land	TKHM(SA)Navsari
Purchased: 1926	Purchased: 1947	Purchased: 1947	Purchased: 1962
Rebuilt: 1973 mainly with UK/Overseas donations	44084 sq. ft flat land. Undeveloped	2.20 acres of Mango plantation Undeveloped	3.81 Acres Undeveloped. Bungalow delapidated
MANAGEMENT:			
Trusts Involved: (a) N.V.K.T.	(a) N.V.K.T.	Trust Involved: (b) D.G.K.K.M.	Trust Involved; (c) TKHM (SA)
Mohanbhai Vakil	Mohanbhai Vakil Navsari Nagarpalika has put this site on their 10 year development plan	Disputed Amrutbhai Koli/ Mohanbhai Vakil	Thakorebhai Vallabhbhai Patel
TITLE DEEDS:			
N.V.K.T.	N.V.K.T.	Kuverji Gopalji	TKHM (SA)

We gathered these details after we got involved in stopping SA trying to sell TKHM Navsari property and take the proceeds to SA.

None of the Trusts have credible constitutions or forward looking management. The Trustees see themselves as lifetime trustees and act as though the properties belong to them.

After two years of our involvement this is now slowly changing.

The 4 properties are very valuable and may fetch over 30 Crore Rupees. But have a mere 3 lakh Rupees revenue per year via rent income of Koli Ashram.

Why do we want to develop these properties?

Koli Patels form some 40% of the population of Navsari District yet have very little, almost negligible influence in the running of Navsari. Most live in the villages and are mainly poor, unskilled and semi-employed.

They have low social status among the other communities. The fact that the ownership of 30 crores worth properties can only generate just 0.1 % of income shows how financially naive we are, even in this day and age.

As far as I am concerned the only reason we want to develop these properties is to help our people in Navsari villages to fast tract them into higher education and technical skill to get them ready for better paid jobs, etc.

There are many other reasons and needs but this to me is crucial as standing on their own two feet is of first importance.

If we have any other agenda we had better think twice before going in. None of us, those who wish to devote time and effort to the project's success or our donors must accept the fact that no personal benefit would accrue to them. It is compassion pure and simple.

What is involved.

Lots of goodwill. Lots of hard work. Lots of frustration. **Lots of convincing both in Navsari and overseas.** Lots of tension. Lots of understanding. Lots of give and take.

Title Deeds have to be sorted out.

Local Trusts have to be brought up to date in terms of Constitution, Management, Accountability.

Assessing needs. This would be easy if we confine ourselves to just one task at a time – say technical education. (Building, Equipment, Management, Running cost, etc).

Planning.

Developing all 4 sites would be a multi dimensional project. This can be broken down in smaller units and then the task becomes easy. Each small unit can be individually costed, built and run.

Each unit however must be part of an overall plan, which initially can be in outline only so that no building is put where it may not belong.

Overall financial targets can be assessed and set. To be realistic however it must be within achievable limits for it to be credible.

What has been done to-date.

Details and status of properties established. Securing the proper titles deeds for the community started.

Credibility and Standing of local Trusts established and areas of improvement agreed and work on these started.

All properties surveyed and possible developments considered.

A five year, possible plan of action prepared and circulated.

Identity of Chhapra Road property holder established and action in progress to transfer the deeds to a Trust.

Two general meeting to discuss the plans have been held in Navsari where over 300 concerned local community members attended and situation explained.

An International team of 12 formed to carry out the project. It is called Koli Patel Vikas Samiti, KPVS.

Permission to make changes of use of Koli Ashram accommodation obtained from original donors and pressure exerted on local Trustees.

All these work has been carried out under the guidance and sponsorship of AMSUK.

AMSUK has set up a NAP sub-committee to work on this project. Members of this subcommittee are mainly from the EC and one or two from outside who have some interest and experience of such work. AMSUK has been allocated 5 members to represent them on KPVS.

AMSUK is the initiator of this development and has a larger share of any other country including Navsari who has 3.

This is a high risk project and quite rightly AMSUK has to be cautious. One of the condition on the NAP is that all decisions have to be approved by the AMSUK EC beforehand. The AMSUK EC meeting is usually attended by some 30 members and not all are equally informed or knowledgeable or keep themselves up-to-date about the project. Anyone casting a little doubt invariably negates the decision. Some members even insists on ownership before any work commenced. AMSUK can only be a partner. Ownership will have to be fully paid for.

This is, as has been said high risk project. There are a number of legal obstacles to be overcome. Some risks have to be taken. Trust has to be placed on members carrying out the task and expenses have to be incurred before any result can be seen.

AMSUK find this difficult.

This is such an extensive project requiring considerable credibility and backing of a substantial organization. AMSUK has been recognized to be such by our global community. **AMSUK must be involved.**

A new development have arisen. It appears that the present constitution of AMSUK does not permit it to undertake any work overseas. There is also doubt in some members mind that a project 4000 miles away would be difficult to manage and execute and later run successfully. The example of SA is to point. SA has done a bad job of the one project they manage by proxy. They have almost completely given up.

While the constitutional problems can be resolved via a new constitution the problem of managing at a distance may be tricky. Marshalling dedicated volunteers to work on this project long term may also be difficulty as the old generation take its leave.

What is the Way Forward.

The suggestion I have, if it is acceptable to AMSUK is for it to withdraw from the active management of the project on the above grounds, namely legal and distance from home. These would be credible excuses. However, with out the full moral support of AMSUK the task for KPVS would be very difficult if not impossible.

So Let AMSUK decide to withdraw from active management but continue wholeheartedly and actively to support all fundraising and necessary administrative needs.

I would end with a fervent desire from Rekhaven in this respect.

“As Hasmukhbhai has said, a need has been identified. We should not be daunted by the task ahead. What we need now, I feel, is for people to put aside their egos, work in a spirit of understanding and co-operation and have open, honest debate within the subcommittee, the EC and the wider community in order to ensure that whatever we may decide to do is not based on any personal agendas but done in the best interests of our community.”

I also would like to say that Rekhaven is more knowledgeable and well qualified to speak on this matters then Rajesh Kisan whose contribution sounds more theoretical then practical.

KJ

(Please add any more points to these without repetition and deemed to be unnecessary boring the other in the presentation. If the rest of you can work on this lines it may keep the project going and all would be happy.)

Also NAP subcommittee is mainly all AMSUK EC members. I wonder if separate NAP meeting would help except to prepare them in advance.

My comments on Rajesh's points:

- A lack clarity of purpose: for me, the purpose is to raise the status of our local Navsari community through education and making them stand on their feet with respect.
- Governance, transparency and accountability: To some securing the site by fencing is peripheral, not integral part and hence the doubts. When global community is involved transparency has to be the priority otherwise the funding would fail.
- Risks of being focused on 'bricks & mortar': This would be so if we stop at brick and mortar and not provide for management, maintenance and running costs of any activity undertaken.
- Needs analysis: By all means carry out the analysis but concentrate on just one aspect at a time. No government survey would give a true picture of the conditions in villages.
- Community engagement: Scores of newsletters, emails and web presentation would be required. Our problem is we have not been able to agree on one.
- * Demonstrating impact and value for money: this is going to be key, not simply from a governance perspective but in terms of maintaining the engagement and support of the wider community. The NAP need to think quite early on about what sort of approach they are going to use to monitor and report investment, outputs and outcomes. AGREED.
- Securing ownership of those assets where there is uncertainty about this: This is indeed a priority but the titles can only vest in the local community Trusts.
- Drawing lessons from others: Has the NAP considered talking to other NRI communities or NGOs in Gujarat to find out about their experiences and learn lessons? In my experience, this type of information is usually free and often invaluable! WE HAVE A LOT OF EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE EC IF WE CARE TO LISTEN.

My quick response to Rajesh Kishan's points.