

OUR VOHRA VILLAGES NEED TO BECOME LESS RELIANT ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THEIR MIGRANTS.

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Before migration started from our SURTI SUNNI VOHRA villages most of our Vohra villagers were not well-off but they were content with what they had. Most of them had little land from which they eked out a living. At planting and harvesting time if those with more land wanted labourers, they would go along to earn a few Rupees. From what little money they had they celebrated the weddings of their children, bought clothes for their family members, bought farm animals, looked after their masjid, paid someone in cash or in kind to teach their children to read the HOLY QUR'AN, looked after their village streets, kept their cemetery clean and tidy and dug graves to lay to rest when a Vohra or other Muslim from their village passed away. Vohra villagers were proud and independent people. They lived off what little they had but never put out their hands to ask for assistance.

Migration of some of our men in search of better earning opportunities started bringing about many changes among our Vohras. Migrant sending families were the first ones to benefit from remittances. Later as the earnings of migrants improved, they started financially supporting other villagers and started giving ZAKAAT to poor villagers. They started building new masajid to replace the old ones, financially supported their village masjid and madressas, helped make available water supplies, got electricity supplies and whatever else their villages needed. The prosperity we have been seeing over the years in our Vohra villages came about almost entirely as a result of the earnings of migrants.

Whilst Vohras and Vohra villages benefited from the earnings of the migrants the financial support from the migrants came to have some negative

effects on the villagers. Having more land and more money for example did not make the Vohras hard working or better farmers. Financial support received by migrants' family members made them distance themselves from work on the land or engage in non-agricultural work or seek secular education to obtain paid work to improve their economic wellbeing.

The migrants did nothing wrong in making available facilities and services their villages needed, like the masjid, madressa, water and electricity supplies but we feel there was a need to keep the villagers involved in whatever the migrants funded. There was a need for the migrants to get the villagers to take some or partial responsibilities for the maintenance of the facilities and services they got.

Many a times whatever the villagers asked for was made available. At other times migrants competed with migrants from other villages to make available facilities and services without being asked for by their own villagers. As a result of the approach the migrants took, a 'GIVE and RECEIVE' relationship became established. Migrants became permanent 'GIVERS' and the villagers became permanent 'RECEIVERS.' We feel the migrants when making available funds for building masajid and madressas for example never took into consideration that the masajid and madressas and the other facilities and services they made available will require money for maintenance and money for paying the Imaam, the muezzin, the cleaner, the madressa teachers and others to look after the other provisions. The migrants did not try to find out if the villagers had the financial means or the will to pay for upkeep of the facilities and the services they got and the villagers never asked the migrants if they needed to pay for the facilities and services they got.

We feel with THE ALMIGHTY ALLAH'S BLESSINGS the 'GIVE and RECEIVE' relation between the migrants and the villagers worked well over the years and we hope and pray that it will continue to go on. Over the years our Vohras never stopped sending their young men abroad in search of better earning possibilities. The new migrants always took over from the older migrants to financially support their villages. Migration from our Vohra villages has not come to full stop, but we all know that migration from our villages has in recent years slowed down. This we feel may possibly have a negative effect on the future funding for paying for the facilities and services used and enjoyed by the villagers as there will be fewer new migrants to take over the responsibilities to financially support the villages.

There is also a need to take into consideration the changes taking place among our Vohra migrants. We feel these changes will also affect the funding for our villages. For example, those born and brought up in foreign countries do not have the attachment to the villages from where their parents or grandparents migrated. We can also come across youngsters who do not know the names of the villages where their parents were born and from where they had migrated. There is also a need for us to take into consideration the changes in the thinking of children and grandchildren of migrants. They, like their parents and grandparents like to give from what they have but would prefer to assist Muslims or those who are not Muslims suffering

from poverty, diseases as well as natural or man made disasters rather than continue to support the villages where their parents or grandparents were born. We also need to take into consideration the changes in the spending preferences of our young persons. Unlike their parents and grandparents who spent less on themselves to allow them to help their relatives and their villages, young people now prefer to spend their money on motor cars, good clothes, big weddings, expensive holidays and honeymoons and own their own homes rather than follow the practices preferred by their parents and grandparents.

Besides the remittances from migrants the villagers have no other sources of incomes to help pay for the facilities and services they use. Some years ago, most if not all masjid had some WAQF land which helped generate some income. Villages no longer have WAQF land. The plots of WAQF land villages had was sold off by the villagers when they needed money to pay for repairs to their masjid or madressa or they needed money for some other work. Some years ago, there was a trend among migrants to buy properties in towns or cities where they had settled or in Indian cities or towns to help generate incomes for their villagers. Most of these properties were sold over the years and the sources of income these provided for some villages came to an end. Our present-day Vohra villagers are not like their forefathers who were always willing to help their village in ways they could. Some who had the means helped their villages with money and others helped with their labour. Present day Vohra villagers are not like their forefathers. •