**A proposal for Comprehensive Redevelopment of Aya Nagar Village
and its Proto-Urban Extension in New Delhi**

Greha

1. In October 1999, the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, requested architect MN Ashish Ganju to undertake a research study on urban systems leading to the establishment of a National Mission for Urban Renewal. The note prepared to initiate this exercise is appended as Att. 1.

2. Following from this initiative, in January 2001 the India office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) approved a grant of one million US Dollars to the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, under a sub-programme entitled Mission for Application of Technology for Urban Renewal and Engineering (MATURE), to undertake a research project for implementing a pilot programme for urban renewal in India. As part of the MATURE project, a case study for demonstration of the idea was proposed to be taken up in an urbanizing village on the outskirts of Delhi.

3. Aya Nagar had been selected in October 1999 by the Chief Minister Delhi as a site for a model village development programme, to be implemented by the Delhi Government in partnership with the local community. A registered non-profit voluntary organization called GREHA, which has been doing research and development work in the area of environmental planning, architecture and building since 1975, was commissioned to prepare a conceptual proposal for the development of Aya Nagar. The proposal is appended as Att.2.

4. This proposal was presented to the Delhi Government, in a meeting chaired by the Chief Minister, on 11 January 2001, and approved for implementation. Minutes of this meeting, issued by the Project Director (Rural Development) Government of Delhi, are appended as Att.3. However, implementation of this project did not proceed satisfactorily, with several starts and stops in the last few years. In December 2006, an enlightened Development Commissioner of the Delhi Government took a fresh initiative to re-start the project by focusing attention on the crucial component of the development programme, that is the village pond (Johar). A record note of the site inspection made by the officials of the Irrigation & Flood Control Department of the Delhi Government, on 9 December 2006, is appended as Att.4.

5. The Johar is the symbolic centre of the village society and habitat. Developmental activity undertaken at this site will not only be most visible, but could became the seed for a social and physical transformation process spreading across the entire settlement.

6. It is evident that the rehabilitation of the Johar (village pond) is directly dependant on the separation of sewerage and surface drainage which presently flows together into the Johar. There is no existing sewage treatment system in Aya Nagar. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has, in the recent past, made open brick-lined drains around the Johar and in several adjoining localities to contain the problem. However, in the absence of a well-engineered and coordinated system of drainage for the settlement as-a-whole, the existing drains are choked, and in fact are a health hazard.

7. Aya Nagar is a settlement of almost 100,000 people. The original village, which has evolved organically for over a hundred years, is surrounded by large areas of land acquired by the Government of India to house planned settlements of an Air Force signals establishment and a Radio Research Centre of the Home Ministry, as well as a spontaneous development of an unauthorized colony of migrants developed on the former agricultural lands of the villagers. Today the community of Aya Nagar is a composite of people from all parts of India, largely from a low-income background.

8. Aya Nagar is now subject to the process of rapid urbanization, alongwith the rest of Delhi and its urban hinterland covering the adjoining States of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Any developmental intervention in Aya Nagar, which can steer the urban transformation towards ecologically viable and sustainable patterns, could become an example for most of the marginal settlements growing around the many cities in the plains of Northern India.

9. The present proposal, to start with a designed intervention at the Johar, which is the symbolic centre of village life and is now derelict and uncared for, requires to be organized on several fronts – community action, habitat design, raising of human and financial resources, and the simultaneous recording of the whole exercise so that the lessons learnt may be shared with the widest possible audience.

10. The tasks to be undertaken are:

a) Community Action

The population of Aya Nagar is a microcosm of the diversity which is representative of India as a nation. The diversity is ethnic, occupational, economic and cultural. It is necessary to focus the rich human potential of the community towards a common purpose of social and physical development. For this task it is proposed to forge a partnership between several non-government organizations which already exist in Aya Nagar, and which have been working with different sections of the community for several years. The lead in this task can be taken by Jan Madhyam, an organization

working successfully with young girls having special needs and their families in Aya Nagar. Jan Madhyam has developed, over the last one decade of work in education and craft based learning, a close bond and relationship of trust with over 100 families of Aya Nagar. This can form the basis for devising a sub-programme of awareness-raising and social mobilisation of the entire community for working harmoniously towards a set of common goals.

b) Habitat Design

The task of providing appropriate urban infrastructure, which is ecologically viable and sustainable, is a great challenge in all Indian cities. In Aya Nagar it is proposed to start with those components of the infrastructure requirement which all sections of the community agree as being essential for the promotion of civilized urban existence. These components are sewerage and surface drainage, as well as provision of water supply of different types for drinking /cooking to flushing/irrigation, and for a self-sustaining system of solid waste disposal/recycling. Within this set it is probable that the problem of drainage is the one around which the entire community can be united for a common purpose.

The natural topography of Aya Nagar is such that it facilitates a gravity based drainage system, which can be designed/engineered most economically. Considering the rapid urban transformation taking place in and around Aya Nagar, it is proposed to plan for a sequentially upgradeable system which can be implemented starting immediately and improved incrementally to provide over time a fully-engineered and sustainable system. An essential pre-requisite for this will be a detailed topographical survey of the existing settlement and its immediate surroundings. The physical survey will also reveal possibilities for water harvesting and recharge of ground water resources.

The demographic data and social profile of the community emerging as a by-product of the community action sub-programme outlined in 10(a) above, can provide the basis for devising a self-sustaining solid waste management methodology. Relying on composting and recycling techniques, solid waste management can be a community driven sub-project generating revenue, thus being financially sustainable.

Once the public health initiates outlined above are on-stream the other components of the overall habitat development described in attachment 2, can be taken up for detailed design and implementation.

c) Raising of Human and Financial Resources

The requirement of resources is of several kinds –
i) People, with a range of skills, living in Aya Nagar, who can form a working team to implement the proposal;

ii) technical experts, like planners, architects, engineers, social scientists, and community work specialists to assist and guide the local working team;

iii) financial capital for funding the research and development work needed to prepare an appropriate methodology for design and implementation of the project (it may be noted that the problem of environmental rehabilitation of such large settlements existing outside the legal framework for decades is a situation without precedent);

iv) funds required for implementation of the rehabilitation/renewal design, which can be organized as a partnership between the Delhi Government, the resident community, and philanthropic agency (either corporate/business houses or international financial institutions);

It is estimated that the preparatory research and development work would require capital amounting to ten percent of the total cost of works to be implemented. Ideally the design of the project should enable implementation starting immediately and continuing in an incremental manner for at least five years.

d) Recording for Learning

The design and implementation of the project will need to integrate "out of the box" thinking with established formulae and practices. All three components outlined above – community action, habitat design, and raising resources – require innovative approaches to bridge the usual divide between norms and practices, which especially in Indian conditions is exaggerated because of our colonial past and language problems caused by people trying to interpret rules written in English.

It is proposed that video documentation of the entire project is done to a communication design structured for learning. The methodology proposed to be evolved for this project should generate a set of guidelines and norms of practice which can be applied for marginal settlements elsewhere. Thus video documentation can become a tool for development, enhancing self-awareness within the working team, increasing dialogue with the local community, and encouraging transparency and democratic procedures throughout the implementation exercise.

11. **Action Programme**

It may be noted that unauthorized urbanization has been increasing in India for the last several decades. In the global context, it is significant that for the first time in human history the majority population of the planet is now settled in urban areas. The largest cities in the world are emerging in the lesser industrially developed nations, that is in Asia and South America; and the majority population of these cities is composed of low-income rural migrants who settle on marginal urban land in slums and unauthorized colonies. Urban planning agencies of the state have not succeeded in integrating the new migrant communities into the planned urban fabric, often resulting in further marginalization (and even criminalization) of the new urbanites. The present proposal is being seen as applied research for devising an appropriate methodology to demonstrate a new urban paradigm which places the concerns of the poor majority at the forefront, and seeks to devise techniques for making urban systems responsive to the imperatives of social justice and ecological viability.

The programme for action can be divided into two phases, the first of 2 years duration and the second of 3 years duration. The first phase will consist primarily of research and design, while the second phase will be detailed design and start of implementation processes.

The first phase action begins with commissioning of the physical survey, the sub-programme of social action, and the simultaneous video documentation of the process. The methodology is fine-tuned and refined as information about ground realities is made available.

The survey data is expected within 12 weeks from start. This will enable the environmental engineering design to commence, which will require another 12 weeks to complete in sufficient detail to start the implementation process.

Within one year from start of work, the public health initiatives should be on-stream, and detail design of the other components outlined in attachment 2 can be commissioned thereafter.

The best judgement estimate for costs of the research component outlined above, for the first phase (of 2 years) is as follows:

a) detailed topographical survey of Aya Nagar and immediate
    surroundings, showing the existing habitation, the contours
    of open lands, levels of existing drains and roads, and
    physical features of the environs of Aya Nagar, covering
    an area of 120 Hectares (300 acres)…………………………......Rs 9 lakh

b) demographic and social profile of the resident community,
    inventory of the existing public facilities, and anticipated/desired
    additional community facilities …………………………………Rs 12 lakh

c) design of video documenting package, and production
     work for one year, including training of selected local volunteers
     who could take over and manage this component in future …………Rs 24 lakh

d) environmental planning and engineering design of public
    health infrastructure, including sewerage, surface drainage,
     roads, augmentation of water supply, and solid waste
     management system   …..…………………………………….Rs 170 lakh

e) overall coordination, liaison between partners, and
    continuous monitoring of works for a period of 2 years ……………...Rs 85 lakh

(NB. Service Tax would be additional)

It is expected that within 2 years of start of work, the full programme of development of Aya Nagar should be in progress, allowing the design team to begin handing over management of the works to community based organizations.

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