



Aga Khan IV
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**Proactive Ismaili Imam:
His Highness the Aga Khan
Part – 3**

After excogitating the diversified projects of the current erudite Ismaili leader, Prince Karim Aga Khan, one could simply realize that the core of the projects is designed to assist mankind in achieving the *hierarchy of needs*. His projects are like the barrels of fertile seeds. They are sown today to provide nourishment to this generation, and the improvised fields of socio-economic development are cultivated in advance for the upcoming generations.

What we know about the hierarchy of needs

According to the American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, individuals acquire harmony with themselves, with the surrounding, and experience ecstasy when their basic physiological needs are met. In his doctrine, *Hierarchy of Needs*, Maslow explains that humans progress through four basic levels: *Physiological*, *Safety*, *Love/belonging*, and *Esteem* to achieve the final level, which is *Self-actualization*.

- The initial stage is referred, as *Physiological* needs. At this level, humans toil to fulfill the basic needs such as food, water, warmth, and shelter.
- After thriving in the first level, they proceed to the next level, *Safety*, where they begin to pay attention to personal health, security, employment, and stability.
- Next, they arise to the third level, *Love/belonging*, in which they begin to value their private and social lives.

- Further, after accomplishing the third level they move toward the fourth level, which is *Esteem*. At this level, they appreciate cognitive and aesthetic knowledge. They begin to learn, share their knowledge, and appreciate beauty. At this level, they enjoy accomplishments, and develop confidence, self-esteem, self-contentment, and empathy.
- Finally, after mastering all the four levels they reach the ultimate level, *Self-actualization*. At this level, individuals are motivated to accomplish what they want to be or what they want to achieve the most. At this stage, they become better problem solvers, and they begin to appreciate creativity and lack of prejudice.

The Nizamuddin Basti Project accomplished by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) is one of the finest living examples where the Basti's people were egressed from the first level of the *Hierarchy of Needs* to the second and the third level. Furthermore, one could simply envision them progressing toward the fourth level by achieving competence and success in worldly endeavors.

When it comes to the socio-economic development and urban revitalization, the proactive Ismaili Imam, His Highness the Aga Khan, amalgamates public-private partnerships and his agencies to discreetly design and implement the projects to upgrade the quality of life of the people living in vulnerable conditions.

What we know about the Nizamuddin Basti Project

- ***The economic conditions of the below average income of Indian families:***
 - a. India is a developing country. “The World Bank estimates that 41.6 percent of India's population lives below \$1.25 per day and 75.6 percent live below \$2 per day” (Haub & Sharma, 2010).
- ***Why was Nizamuddin Basti chosen for the renewal:***
 - a. As the Aga Khan said, *“All our programmes have three aspects in common: they are carried in a poor environment where there are considerable centrifugal, sometimes even conflicting, forces at play; they are designed to have maximum beneficial impact on the economies of the populations involved and their quality of life in broadest sense of the terms; they are planned in the long term, over a period of up to twenty-five years, enabling them to become self-sufficient both financially as well as in terms of human resources”* (Aga Khan IV. Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 3).
 - b. One-third of the Delhi’s population resides in slums. They are deprived from basic human needs. Nizamuddin Basti was among one of the places where clean environment, better housing, fundamental education, quality health care, and essential vocational skills were a *distant dream* for the locals. They were struggling to thrive in the first two levels of the hierarchy needs mentioned by Maslow.
- ***Location of the Nizamuddin Basti:*** Nizamuddin Basti is a district in Delhi, India, which is located to the west of Humayun’s Tomb. It is a domicile of history as it contains historic monuments and “...landmarks dating to the Mughal and pre-Mughal periods” (Nizamuddin basti, 2009). The community lives around the 14th century Sufi Saint Hazart Nizamuddin Auliya’s dargah. The monuments and the socio-economic development of the diverse community residing in the

Nizamuddin Basti required *combined developmental approach* to promote economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being.

- ***Initiation of the Project:*** The project was commenced on July 11, 2007.
- ***Area covered:*** The project covered over 200 acres of area, which comprised Humayun's Tomb, Sunder Nursery, and Hazart Nizamuddin Basti (Nizamuddin basti, 2009)
- ***The Consortiums involved in the Project:*** Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Archaeological Survey of India, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Central Public Works Department.
- ***Co-founders involved in the Project:*** Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Ford Foundation, World Monument Fund, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, and U S Embassy, India.
- ***Supporters of the Project:*** Delhi Development Authority, Delhi Jal Board, and Housing and Urban Development Corporation.
- ***Span of the Project:*** This project sheltered the revitalization of the heritage conservation, socio-economic development, and the environment development.

****In this paper we will explore the Socio-Economic development segment of the Nizamuddin Basti. The paper highlights Housing and Environment Improvement, Education Initiatives, Health Initiatives, and Economic Development Initiatives****

Before the initiation of the Nizamuddin Basti project, many families in the Basti lived miserable lives due to unsafe living environment and housing facilities. The people were living in the houses with poor light, lack of sanitation, clean drinking water, and ventilation facilities. Furthermore, the surrounding areas around the houses were covered with debris and litter, which had a negative impact on the local's physical and psychological health which ultimately affected their social lives.

The Aga Khan emphasizes the importance of housing and the physical environment around the ambit in people's lives. According to him: *[T]he visual, physical and emotional impact of a decent home can light the spirit of human endeavour. A proper home can provide the bridge across that terrible gulf between utter poverty and the possibility of a better future*" (Aga Khan; MHI, 2011, September).

Housing and Environment Initiatives

1. The accumulation of the litter was the biggest problem, and hence the initiative developed a waste management program with Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). The large open space was landscaped and redeveloped which helped to improve the quality of life.
2. "Lectures were offered on the importance of hygiene and sanitation in the light of Quran and Hadith" (Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 171)
3. The initiative carried the Street Adoption Program through which the "Musafir Khana Street of Hazart Nizamuddin was adopted by eco-club children to ensure proper waste management on that street" (Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 171).
4. To enhance young children's knowledge about the environment and its significance, fieldtrips were conducted to various considerable environmental

places such as “Yamuna Bio-diversity Park, Teri Gram, Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, Dev-Priya Paper Mill Center for Science and Environment, and Vasant Vihar Decentralized Waste Water Treatment Plant” (Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 171).

5. Community videos, comics, street theater performances, real life dramas, discussions, and puppet shows were conducted to make the people aware of the social issues and waste management systems. Furthermore, rallies and cleanliness drives were conducted to promote eco-friendly living, and to urge and motivate people to join the AKTC programmes.
6. Furthermore, through this initiative Basti’s infrastructure was improved by streets paving, installing underground electric lines, streetlights, and street furniture.

Post Benefits

1. Development of eco-friendly environment and endorsement of environmental awareness.
2. “Improved basic facilities i.e. safe drinking water, waste management and sanitation to bring down morbidity and vector borne diseases” (Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 114).
3. Development of open play areas. Improved and clean environment prevented depression among young children.

Education Initiatives

- The physical structure of the MCD School is enhanced by constructing new rooms, landscaping the school park, and adding age-appropriate gears for the young children.
- High quality education facilities are promoted by training teachers in reliable early childhood pre-intervention, teaching, and management skills. Additionally, required appropriate learning materials and computers are added to provide creative instructional strategies.
- Building a bridge of home, school, and community through parent-teacher conferences, cultural programs, curriculum nights, book fairs, sports events, fieldtrips, and summer camps.

Post Benefits

- Generated awareness about Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD).
- The project “has led to a 300% increase in student enrolment” (Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 9).

Health Initiatives

- Under this project the health care facilities were improved at the MCD polyclinic (Government Health Centre) to benefit everyone in the ambit “especially the most vulnerable sections of the society” (Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 110).
- Enhancement of the pathological laboratory, ENT, Gynecology, Out-Patient Department (OPD), children immunization system, and health care facilities.

Post Benefits

- Young children are receiving the required immunization as per the age-group schedule. The common illnesses in the young children are detected and cured at an initial stage.
- New mothers are being educated about the reproductive health care, prenatal care, child growth monitoring, and nutritional supplements.
- Locals are well informed about the preventive health care measures through healthy living habits.

Economic Development Initiatives

- Youths of the Nizamuddin Basti were provided various skill training in several different areas by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO). The skill training areas included: education, health, sanitation, cultural revival open space development, computer skills, masonry, handicrafts, Mughal tile making, book binding, plumbing, and travel and tourism.
- Special training was provided to women in embroidery, tailoring, and block printing. Furthermore, to help women become independent earners they were trained for the enterprise development through which they were able to participate in the exhibitions and fairs such as Apni Basti Mela and Fall Mela organized by the High Commission of Canada.

Post Benefits

- “Improved income led to better health and health seeking behavior” (Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 114).

- “Forum for outreach of ECCD and development messages” (Annual Progress Report, 2011, p. 114)
- Improved employment opportunities, alumni are tracked to offer employment.

Thus, through his projects the Aga Khan is replacing the fear and distress among the people by giving them hope and arrays of opportunities for better future. *The replacement of fear by hope is probably the single most powerful trampoline of progress*” (Aga Khan; MHI, 2010, July). Hence, to spark assurance and improve *the level of hierarchy of needs* of the deprived population, the Aga Khan is efficiently demonstrating the dogma of Islam through his countless inspiring ventures.

The Ismaili leader values proactive actions and believes *“One has to work to give people confidence and hope; that changes society”* (Aga Khan; MHI. 2010, October). Hence, he is determined to *change the society* by creating a web of projects that are gradually enhancing people’s lives not in days or months but in years – in the several upcoming years!

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Insha’Allah in the upcoming articles we will explore the heritage conservation and the environment development of the Project

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