



Lt. General Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM (Retd.)

**Dear Friends,**

On 15th August we celebrated India's 62nd Independence Day. On such occasions we must never forget to pay tributes to leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and several other freedom fighters, who secured freedom for us from foreign rule that lasted for over 700 years. Their achievement was phenomenal because freedom was secured without bloodshed, by non-violence.

However, for the past sixty-two years, there is an unfinished agenda our fore-fathers handed over to us. Till today we are still not free from poverty. The lack of leadership in public life and education are primarily responsible for this state of affairs. Statistics speak for themselves:

- 500 million people in our country live below the poverty line. That is 50 percent of the world's hungry people. Their daily earnings are less than \$1 and 25 cents a day. They cannot afford two square meals a day. So they go to bed hungry every night, deprived of safe drinking water, shelter, schooling, primary health care, and no toilets.
- 32 out of every 1000 children who are born are destined to die before they reach the age of five due to malnutrition. This works out to 5.6 million child deaths every year.
- 47 percent of India's children below the age of five are severely malnourished. Malnutrition lowers the human IQ by upto 15 points, and is responsible for learning disabilities, dwarfism, and blindness.

- 350 million are illiterate; this more than the population of the United States and Canada.
- Female infanticide in India has reached alarming proportions. According to a UNICEF report 50 million girls and women are missing from India's population. Against the world average of 105 females for 100 males, in India it is 93 females for 100 males.

We cannot be free if half our population is still caught up in the poverty trap. A hungry man, an illiterate man, cannot be free.

There is more to poverty than just statistics.

Poverty is being unwanted, being lonely, being uncared for, being unloved. Poverty is the insensitivity of the rich to the conditions of the poor. Poverty is to see your children die before your eyes and you are helpless to do anything to stop it.

When two boys in Bastar are fighting over a roasted rat; that is poverty.

When a girl of eight becomes the lady of the house after her mother has died; that is poverty.

When 12 persons are living in 90 square feet room – half the size for an Innova car parking space – that is poverty.

When three farmers commit suicide every day; that is poverty.

Poverty is hunger, frustration, and ugliness. Poverty takes away a human being's dignity; it alienates him; and it is the worst form of violence by man against man.

The time has come for we, who are privileged, to act. The time has arrived to arouse our disgust, our guilt, and also our commitment to the poor. Do you not think we, who are privileged, should do act to try and reverse the situation? Or are we to continue remaining mere spectators and bystanders, and watch children suffer and die because they cannot afford schools, food and medicines?

At Indus we believe that education must have a social purpose.

At Indus we believe that educating the head, the heart, and the spirit are more important than mere academic scores in examinations.

At Indus we believe in making a difference.

We have decided to start an international school in June 2010 for the rural poor in the neighbourhood. The children will belong to the weaker sections of society and 50 percent will be girls. They will pay fees of Rs 1000 for the year. The teachers and infrastructure of this school will be exactly like this school, in some areas even better.

We call upon you to support this initiative. Come forward and help us raise funds to run such a school. You can make a difference in the life of a child by contributing Rs 5000 for the entire year. This will be an act of supreme love. Let me tell you that there is no better way of becoming a good human being than when you do good to another human being.

This is leadership.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arjun Ray". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Lieutenant General Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM (Retd.)  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Indus Trust.