

A Tribute to Late Laxmi Chand Tyagi

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1945-2005

The Founder of GRAVIS

"One man is enough for any reform how impossible it may appear in the beginning... Though he may die, the reforms survive and prosper. He ensures their stability with his blood."

--- M. K. Gandhi

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With unflagging devotion to his organization, with bottomless compassion for the rural poor, and with boundless love for his family, let us say that Laxmi Chand Tyagi lived his life fully and he lived it well. And from the outpouring of grief at his funeral, and from hundreds of family, friends, and well-wishers who gathered to commemorate him, it was clear to all present that Tyagi ji profoundly touched many lives. While we mark his untimely passing with deep sadness, we at the same time honor the daily passion with which he approached his life and his work.

Born in 1945, Tyagi ji grew up in Uttar Pradesh. He and his wife Shashi Tyagi ji - after their experience with the Sarvodaya Movement and yearning to do their bit for the poor and the underprivileged - moved to Rajasthan and founded Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS) in 1983 in Gagadi village, located 60 kilometers from Jodhpur. In the 22 years of GRAVIS' existence, the organization's work has expanded to include more than 550 villages, spread over several districts of Rajasthan. As Director of GRAVIS, Tyagi ji became renowned both nationally and internationally for his social activism and commitment to the people of the Thar Desert. Diagnosed with chronic renal failure in January 2005, Tyagi ji passed away after a long struggle on 27 July, 2005. His wife, son Prakash, and daughter Abha were by his side during his last moments.

Tyagi ji was a father figure to many both within our organization and beyond it. Indeed his dedication to the cause of the rural poor continues to inspire the GRAVIS staff and its partner organizations. Although he has passed from our lives, his spirit remains within us, and we will continue tirelessly in the direction that he led us. He shared with us his wisdom, his enthusiasm, and his generosity. That is his legacy. For that we are forever grateful.

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Some Words in Memory of Tyagi ji

"In the span of my life, there are a few people who stand out for me in a way unique in my experience. Those few people share a quality which I cannot name, but only describe, as being with them has the quality of my wanting to be better, to be my best, to try and understand others more fully, to try and be more generous than I might be normally. Tyagi ji is such a person in my life. Sitting with him and talking over projects, the people with whom we have worked, the short and long term hopes we have for life, all these things are treasures.... However much time each of us has on this Earth, the wisdom and generosity of his choices continues to inspire me."

--- Michael Mery, long time friend

"Laxmi was my father, guru, and inspiration for my life work, he taught me how to be and took me to the highest point in intellectual thinking. Even though we will never see each other again it does not matter as he speaks through my words and actions for years to come."

--- Hasmukh Hoslo Jiwa, GreenLife Society

"This great man's life has ended. I hear in my soul his voice as we prayed together each morning. I see his loving, wise, profound eyes smiling. And I retain such an inspiration from that privileged short time in which we felt the power and direction and all the courage of his life and work. Please know how much our thoughts are with you, and feel our prayers surround you. With many loving thoughts we reach out to you."

--- Carmen and Patrick Lavin, Trustees, Wells for India

