

A library is more than just a collection of books on a shelf. A library is a common good and a key component for development, social change, and learning. It is a welcoming physical space where people choose to gather. A library is a social place that helps to diminish social isolation. It is a place where children and adults can ask questions about the world and find the answers.

A village library represents the dream of a prosperous world where, in an increasingly knowledge based society, knowledge is equally shared among rural and urban-- equally shared among rich and poor. And, in the process, a stronger and better community is built.

Because many parents in villages remain illiterate, there is often little support for reading habits at home, where reading is essential for children. Thus, for a child in a village, a library will provide a space where he or she learns the joys of being able to read.

To children living in a remote village, a library will be a space for them to share the love of learning with their friends, where they will have access to information, the same information as children living in the cities and towns of India. A library in Kattu Sithamoor will provide a space where children and adults learn how to use the gift of knowledge, where doors to learning will be opened and will always remain open.

The goal of this project is to establish a village library that can become not only a center of learning, but also a space where the village community can gather to learn and grow together.

The village library must be a welcoming space where the children's young inquisitive, curious, and fertile minds will be nurtured. The library will be filled with beautifully written and illustrated books to stimulate their imagination beyond their village, to a global village with limitless opportunities. It will help the children of Kattu Sithamoor to cultivate truly independent minds while enjoying the wonder of books in the company of their friends.

K. Paripooranam, a volunteer with Asha/Chennai, has selected the village of Kattu Sithamoor as the site for the proposed library for several reasons. At this time, there are three teachers living in Kattu Sithamoor, being paid by Asha. Paripooranam sees these teachers once a month as she is responsible for giving them their monthly payments. Thus, there will be, minimally, monthly feedback from the teachers working in the village. Secondly, there is a government middle

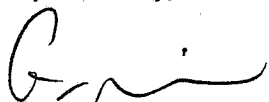
school in the village with 250 students. Thus, the library can, potentially, serve a large number of children. Additionally, there is an empty building in the village which has been designated as a library. The village council has offered this building for the library proposed in this letter.

The adult community of Kattu Sithamoor will have an important role to play in the life of the library. I believe in the philosophy that says people value what they have helped to build. The village adults will be asked to participate in the renewal and maintenance of the library. A villager will be employed and trained as the librarian.

For the adult population using the library, providing general reading materials and specific books and periodicals on the subject of agricultural development will be an important part of the collection. Materials relating to general health will also be an important part of the library's collection for all who will be using the library.

The addition of a library is an uplifting development for a village, an uplifting force that can only improve and strengthen the lives of those living in a village and, in so doing, strengthen the village itself.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gershon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gershon Gurin-Podlish

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