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**Commentary**



**Where Is He?**

SEBI director Dr Mohan Gopal, who co-authored the report on NSDL's role in the 2006 IPO scam, has become incommunicado. [Read more...](#)



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**a school for Special Children**

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**Krishnamurthy Vijayan**

**Krishnamurthy Vijayan visits a school for mentally challenged children in Aurangabad and imbibes a joyous lesson on caring and sharing**

Mentally retarded, autistic, mongoloid... Okay, you and I are politically correct people, so we would never say that: we call them special children. But what do parents do when they are the chosen ones for bringing up a special child? Hide 'it' away, appoint a nurse, curse fate, visit God-men or silently train themselves to teach the child to fend for itself? I have seen many different approaches to handling this gift, and I won't judge because I don't know how I would have handled it. But, last month, I met a group of people in Aurangabad (better known for Ajanta, Ellora and Paithani saris) who showed me another option: build a large joint family around the child.

The Swayamsiddh family is unique: a group of couples in Aurangabad, who had special children, decided to do something about it. They came together and started a school to teach, train, develop and provide therapy to each child and make it part of a large joint family of similar children; thus, forever banishing the loneliness and depression that all too often they fall prey to. Swayamsiddh allows them to enjoy life and live it to its fullest.

The school is a little way off the Walmi-Waluj Road in Aurangabad. The first thing that strikes you is how the modest two-storey structure appears to sweep jauntily into the sky like a little concrete kite festooned with colourful pictures. It was built on fees that the eminent singer Jagjit Singh donated after a Swayamsiddh concert, on property donated by Somnath Sakhare (after a chat on a flight with Harish Bajjal, the mentor of this project).

The building reflects the remarkable vision of its 'joint family'. There is a gym equipped with specially imported equipment to train children in the rigours of their daily life—balance, motor coordination and strength for basic functions. In the classrooms, teacher-parents train their children gradually, from painting between lines, to connecting dots, to making beautiful handicrafts. This therapeutic education for children with a range of challenges has achieved remarkable results. For some sales, the children are able to keep their own accounts; some have won dance competitions; for a few, even sitting up is an achievement. A boy who could not even be propped up initially responds to physiotherapy, while a little deaf-mute girl has bones too brittle even for physiotherapy and has to be handled delicately, like old parchment. Yet, the principal, who took us to this room, and the teacher-parent who entered a little later, greeted her as though she were just another baby. Was it my imagination that the child seemed to respond to their warm vibes?

That these children make eye contact, support each other and are not afraid to touch or be touched is another achievement: it is because all the adults around them give and accept hugs from them. Yes, everything is an achievement in this joint family.

How do I enumerate the imagination of these parents? They organise workshops for siblings who may feel neglected by their parents' focus on the special child; workshops for grandparents to help them support these parents; Amitabh Bachchan, Shankar Mahadevan and Adnan Sami 'Nites'

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Though the ash cloud from Iceland grounded European airlines for a considerable period, local travel & tourism companies have yet to figure out the damage that they have suffered



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The stock exchange has sought clarification from the company for a series of violations against the Listing Agreement



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Although there are no comparable stocks, other edible oil companies are available at a much cheaper price



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There were zero bids from the QIB category for the Tarapur Transformers IPO, while the retail investor category was subscribed 0.79 times on the opening day of this offering,



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Noted writer Achyut Godbole chaired a Moneylife Foundation workshop for booklovers on 17 April 2010.



Moneylife Foundation conducts 'Brainstorming seminar on senior citizens issues'(09 April 2010).



Moneylife Foundation

conducts financial literacy workshop for women (26 March 2010).



Moneylife Foundation conducted a special financial literacy workshop for women on the occasion of International Women's Day (8 March 2010)



Moneylife Foundation organised an open discussion on "Budget and You" on 27 February 2010. The participants were presented with a detailed analysis of the implications of the Budget proposals.



Sanjay Nirupam, Member of Parliament, inaugurating the Moneylife Knowledge Centre on 6 February 2010.



Moneylife, in association with Reliance Mutual Fund, organised the Big Ideas Essay Contest on "Taking Financial Markets to the Masses," on 5 December 2009.

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in remote Aurangabad; treating each other's children as their own—the list is diverse and endless.

And that brings me to Harish Bajjal, a self-effacing policeman who is currently DCP (anti-corruption) in Nashik, better known to us as the man who launched a crusade against drunk-driving. Through his efforts, Swayamsiddh gets some unusual sponsors. That's what he does—instead of using his contacts and his chair for furthering his career, he has decided to use it for furthering the cause of this remarkable group of people. So, if you get an SMS from a policeman, don't tremble; call back and join the family.

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## What's Hot From this section

- Udhaar se Swadhaar tak**  
Dr Nita Mukherjee describes the work of an NGO promoting financial literacy among Mumbai's slum women
- Spreading the Vision of Financial Inclusion**  
This time we write about Moneylife Foundation, our very own initiative to spread financial literacy and help investors
- A Perfect Hub for Social Activism**  
Amritha Pillay
- A Fresh Innings for the Elderly**  
Amritha Pillay reports on an NGO that is dedicated to helping senior citizens live and die with dignity
- a school for Special Children**  
Krishnamurthy Vijayan visits a school for mentally challenged children in Aurangabad and imbibes a joyous lesson on caring and sharing

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