

STEWARDS ASSOCIATION IN INDIA – A Review.

The Stewards Association in India (SAI) was registered in 1954 as a Religious and Charitable Society and has been engaged in the stewardship of Brethren properties entrusted with the Association in the post-independence era either by the Missionaries or from the Stewards Company Ltd., Bath, England. The main functions of the Association, over and above safeguarding its properties, comprising of the Assemblies, different type of Institutions like Hospitals, Schools, Boys & Girls Homes, Old age Homes etc., also included catering to the needs of the Evangelists, the Poor and Needy, Widows, Orphans, Destitute etc.

However, in the recent times when we have introspected our actions with respect to the specific God given mandate we received for effective service to the Assemblies and fellow Brethren in the Country, we realized that we have been following a stereotype model which emphasized primarily on the security of our landed properties in the by-gone years. Maybe on account of this, we couldn't prioritize the much needed timely assistance and service to the larger segments of our needy Evangelical Workers and our Brothers and Sisters who are placed in a hostile environment in the remote regions of India. This scenario might have emerged due to the absence of a distinct and clear Vision for the Association and thereby we now suspect whether we have fallen short of the God-given mandate and the set goals which were divinely ordained unto us. Therefore, having comprehended this ground reality, the Lord has led us to the realization that the Association should be blessed with a distinct and precise tangible Vision. After much deliberation and prayer, we could finally draft and finalize upon this vitally important document which would govern the future course of the Mission of the Association, characterizing the very purpose and goal of the formation of SAI. Hence our new found Vision and Mission of SAI are as follows:

VISION

Equipping and empowering Assemblies and fellow Brethren by professing and practicing faithful Stewardship of entrusted material resources through practical and tangible services towards the betterment of the believer community in the light of the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

MISSION

Using God-given landed properties and resources to extend a helping hand to the Christian Assemblies and in the physical as well as spiritual enrichment of needy fellow brethren, thereby displaying faithful stewardship in all areas and thus in effect serving God selflessly and fearlessly standing in the gap and ministering to the Christian Brethren community.

As you are aware, many of our Assemblies are situated in the remote areas of the North, Central and Eastern parts of India and are struggling to make two ends meet. When we went into the depth of the varied problems faced by some of these Assemblies in these

areas, we were startled to realize that we do not possess even a basic information about a large number of these Believers / Evangelists / Gatherings which are in existence in the isolated and backward areas of the country.

In retrospect, the Lord has given us a special burden in this regard with respect to these Rural Assemblies. Hence, we thought it would prove useful to collect necessary data with respect to the totality of all our Assemblies housed all over India and bring out an all exhaustive Directory, as the 1998 SAI Directory has now become almost obsolete.

To go about this task, we have decided to gather information through the Members / Representatives of SAI who are based in the various States/ Regions and publish a new Directory with the Names, Addresses and other details of our Assemblies and Institutions housed in the various States of our Country. Under this statistics, we would like to receive the details of our Assemblies which are gathering in various homes / rental places / own buildings, irrespective of the fact that the Assembly property is registered with SAI or not. After the receipt of the complete authentic information, we would go ahead with the publication of this Directory which will also be quite useful for our travelling brethren and for prayer purposes as well. Such a large scale exercise will only be possible with the whole-hearted help, support and physical assistance of the Believers / Elders / Evangelists of our Assemblies in India.

For the above purpose, the SAI Members / Representatives will approach the Assemblies and compile the data State / Region wise. The leadership of our Assemblies are also requested to pass on the relevant information about any new / less known Assemblies / Gatherings in their Areas / Regions which might not have been known otherwise, so that the proposed Directory will be complete and totally comprehensive in nature.

Another area of grave concern, as highlighted earlier, lies in the area of financial assistance for the large number of our Believers who can be designated as belonging to 'Below Poverty line' strata of society. We have to admit that we could not do much in this matter due to the scarce inflow of designated funds from Western sources. However, as can be seen in our new found Vision and Mission statements, we are determined to address at least the following crucial needs pertaining to our less privileged fellow Brethren. Hence, we believe that we should offer a helping hand to these Brethren:

1. At the time of sickness of self and the family members of our Evangelists and poor Brethren.
2. In the educational needs of the bright children of our financially challenged Brothers and Sisters.
3. On the occasion of the marriage of their daughters.
4. For daily sustenance and other pertinent needs.

5. Who are Widows, Destitutes and Orphans of our Assemblies and Institutions.
6. In the event of an accident / unforeseen happenings in their life.

To meet these large requirement, we are motivated to tap the resources of our Indian Brethren placed in India and abroad whom the Lord has entrusted with a large chunk of His material resources. If all our 'have' Assemblies / Believers nationally as well as internationally are encouraged to earmark and commit a portion of their God given financial resources for the benefit of the above said 'have nots', then the purpose of God in the financial blessings of the former will definitely be accomplished. We should always be reminded of the fact that these 'have nots' are leading a hand to mouth existence and that the Lord has blessed us materially in order that we share these material blessings with the ones who lack it.

We thus appeal to all our Assemblies / Believers in India and Abroad, who share our concern with regard to these Evangelists / Poor Brethren, to get involved in this God-ordained goal. We as well, exhort our young professional Believers working in the Corporate Companies and other Sectors in India to generously contribute towards this noble cause, as we believe that it will be a great investment in the Kingdom of God. For your benefit, we have resolved to launch a new Indian Trust in the name and style 'STEWARDS CARE' exclusively for catering to the necessities of the 'Poor and Needy' and this new Trust will shortly be receiving the 80 G Exemption of the Income Tax Rules so that our believer Professionals can avail full Tax exemption for the amount thus contributed towards this charity. One thing we can assure all our brothers and sisters is that each and every small or large contribution will be accounted professionally and the funds will reach the target recipients as desired by the Donors and we further reassure you that you will be notified about the receipt of your donation through our web site. If you would like to involve in this ministry, please visit our web site www.stewards-india.com wherein you will find our Bank Account details meant for Indian as well as International Donors separately. Should you like to communicate with us, our mail id is stewards.assn@gmail.com

In conclusion, all I would like to emphasize comes from Luke 6:38 wherein our blessed Lord himself commands " *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that that you use, it shall be measured back to you.*"

May the Lord give adequate wisdom and guidance to all of us to perform what is right and to make wise use of the resources He has entrusted with us for the glory of His name and for extension of His Kingdom and counsel us to be faithful stewards of His material blessings as this would indeed be well pleasing in the sight of our Master.

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