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2008

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**Mukti - A Journey towards Independence
Gayatri Pal and Dipa Mondal**

While the honorable Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh was hoisting flag at Red Fort to celebrate India's 61st years of independence, at the same time 1500 young students marched to mark the Independence Day far, far away in one of the remotest parts of the country, the Sunderbans. These youngsters are part of the coaching centers that are run by Mukti, an organization dedicated to uplift the underprivileged by eradicating poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy. The Mukti movement started in 2003 in Sunderbans delta of West Bengal by few energetic idealists who envisioned a world, where hunger was unheard of and

health and education were basic rights. "Jodi tor daak shune keu na aase, tobe ekla cholo re' (If they don't answer to thy call, walk alone. Open your mind and speak alone till it reaches the subconscious of all!) was the mantra that these people believed in.

Since its conception Mukti has grown into a successful organization, drawing dedicated volunteers from around the world, who are leading various projects that help boost local economy, education health and culture. Our country is a land of potentials, but how can one provide education for his off springs, when it is an everyday battle to bring food to the table? With the help of world wide individual donors, Mukti's TSS (Talented Student Scholarship) program is currently sponsoring hundred such meritorious but needy students whose academic career would have had come otherwise to an abrupt end.

At this point an obvious question may arise. "Is my money going for the right cause?" When it comes to Mukti we can vote that Mukti is an organization where "The mind is without fear and the head is held high". We are proud to announce that with Mukti's aid the students have been able to succeed and pursue their academic dreams. To provide additional support, Mukti is distributing textbooks through Book Bank project and has opened eight tutorial centers benefiting more than eight hundred students. This year's Independence Day also set milestone for Mukti's movement against illiteracy as a public library dedicated to local needy was inaugurated in Nagendrapur of Sunderbans delta. Mukti is determined to carry the torch in the race against illiteracy so that no children are left behind. It is a monumental task but someday we would reach our goal with generous help from you. There is no "right time"! Let us start TODAY!

Mukti believes in sustainable growth and development in the rural areas by using non-arable lands. It undertook Coconut Plantation project in Sunderban, where coconuts will be grown in high saline lands that are otherwise unusable. Even the majority of the usable lands are single crop, causing hardship for small farmers. This simple, sustainable yet high impact project caught immediate attention of the highest government officials. The Central Government of India extended its aid for the project by granting INR 20,00,000 for the current year and promised even more in the upcoming years. This is definitely significant as this is the first time a NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) has supported a project sponsored by a NGO in West Bengal and also by far it is the largest project sponsored by Mukti. Needless to mention that this project would have a tremendous ecological as well as socio-economical impact creating approximately 25000 man days of direct employment and much more indirectly, boosting the local economy within a few years time.

There are myriad NGOs that are currently active for rural development in India. What is Mukti's uniqueness? Many NGOs have got the fund but do not have access to the remotest, underdeveloped areas. Mukti's grass-root level volunteers are bridging these two groups; the donors and the recipients. For example, the vocational training, through which Mukti plans to train the local workforce in marketable skills, would increase the earning potential and make them self-reliant. This is capitol intensive which demands a proper infrastructure in order to receive grant from Central Government. Asha-USA extended their help to make vocational training project a reality. Mukti has also successfully initiated revenue generating environmentally sustainable psiculture projects. In future with all these skilled workers, Mukti envisions forming self-help groups to transform them into self-sufficient entrepreneurs.

We have a dream and we want all of you to be a part of it. Sky is our limit. Come, please join us to walk the walk with us.

YOU have the power to help others!

Please visit us at www.muktiweb.org. With your help we shall overcome one day.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.