

### Editor's Note

#### Seasons Greetings!

Welcome to the first edition of Conversations, a journal about courage, commitment and change.

Over the past forty years, I have had the opportunity to interact with many leaders. The ones who have engaged me the most belong to a special creed - the servant leaders. They have the extraordinary power to inspire, motivate, and influence the lives of people around them. What distinguishes them most is their humility and their nerve. They work not for popularity but because they are passionate about a cause. There is a lot we can learn from, and about, them.

It has been said that when someone hurts us, we should write it down in sand where winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it.

We hope that Conversations will do just that.

Conversations will chronicle the lives and opinions of these change-makers and path-breakers who touch many many lives.

I personally invite you to share your feedback with us, and share your own stories of inspiration. It's time to start some great conversations!

P.N. Devarajan

### Editorial team

**Chennai**  
AK  
Latha Suresh  
Marie Banu  
Radha Jagan  
Yogini

**Hyderabad**  
K L Srivastava

**Bangalore**  
Aruna Subramaniam

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Centre for Social Initiative and Management

391/1, Venkatachalapathi Nagar,

Alapakkam, Chennai -600 116.

Phone: 24867565/7566

Email: csim.conversations@gmail.com.

Website: www.csim.in

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## The First Million Project

Visiting a bookstore to buy books or visiting a well-stocked library to read books may be a way of life for urban children. For a rural school-going child in India, owning a book has been a fantasy. However, with the launch of the First Million Project, the picture is changing.

The First Million Book project, launched by the Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani Trust, aims at distributing books to one million children in rural balwadis in Tamilnadu. This pictorial book narrates daily activities to be followed by a child in a sequential way.

Many children are proud owners of the very first book in their lives. Each child also receives a tree sapling of their choice to grow in her/his house as part of the First Million Trees project. The children are given a Tree Card to track the growth of their trees.

### A day at the balwadi

Yesterday was a day of revelation for me, a city-bred mother. Rosy and I drove down to visit a Balwadi in a remote village in Madurantakam to distribute books and saplings of our 'First million project'. As we entered the campus, two smiling ladies greeted me. One was the Balwadi

teacher and the other a helper-cum-cook. Within a few minutes, 15 little disheveled children in discolored dresses ran towards us shouting from all directions. The children were unmindful of their thorn pricks and stone bites while running bare-foot from home. I was touched by the unbridled display of affection between the teacher and the children.

What a happy scene, I thought, - a happy teacher, a happy coworker, and a bunch of happy kids. This was indeed a seat of learning.

The minute I stepped into the Balwadi, however, I was in for a rude shock. The Balwadi's cemented floor was chipped in many places and the walls were cracked and paintless. There was no light or fan as they did not have electricity. There was a quaint smell of cooked rice and firewood from the kitchen. Rice with dal and vegetables were the main reason for the children to be sent by their parents.

The teacher and children were oblivious to all these things, they had their own way of enjoying what they had. The children rattled Thirukurals, Tamil and English rhymes and movie songs. They were very happy to be at the Balwadis as they were learning some new thing every day, playing endlessly with their friends, and being offered sumptuous lunch. The



joy in the teachers' eyes was immeasurable and the adoring look the children gave their teacher made me envy the teacher of her fan club. We called the children and distributed the books and trees to them. They were so happy to hold them in their hands as they had never received such gifts from anyone.

The questions they asked were: Is it really for me? Should I give it back to you after a while? Can I take it home? Can I show it to my sister and brother? Should I bring it to the balwadi?

We further told them to plant the trees near their houses, water them every day

and protect them. As we were planning to leave, an eighteen year old girl came running inside. She came to give her first wedding invite to the most important person in her life - her balwadi teacher. I just realized that these Balwadi teachers were 'surrogate' mothers to the little children in the villages. They help these children to talk, read, write, share.

This episode set me thinking of what I did twenty years ago. Deciding on a pre-school to send my two-year-old daughter was difficult. After analyzing each nursery school in the neighborhood for its innovative aspects, educa-

tional aids, play area, ambience, safety, location, number of teachers, quality of caretakers, I identified one good pre-school. She would go to preschool flaunting the best of her dresses, and bags, and rattled rhymes and songs in accented English. She was then enrolled into one of the best private schools and college later. My daughter, a graduate now, does not remember much of her pre-school days or the stories that her teacher had told her. She can only remember her rides to the school, and the fun she had playing in the colourful slide and see-saw with few of her friends whom she does not remember now.

After what had happened yesterday I wondered whether my priorities in choosing a preschool were right. Were not the rural mothers much thoughtful and right in sending their children to balwadis because they trusted the teachers and did not base their decision depending on the infrastructure or ambience of the school like we urban mothers did? And what the city based kids remember is only the swing, slide and other infrastructure of the school and forget the most important architect of the preschool - teachers.

Are we inculcating the right values to our children at the tender age of 3? Aren't we sowing the seed of commercialism indirectly and contributing to the problems that it brings along.

—Latha Suresh

It costs Rs.50/- to deliver a book and tree to one child. Sponsor for our cause - Send your cheques to Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani, 391/1, Venkatachalapathi Nagar, Alapakkam, Chennai - 116

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# A New Dawn

Arunodayam, a home to homeless mentally challenged children provides a new beginning to 90.

Giggles and laughter welcomed us at Sri Arunodayam. A group of about 10 children aged between 3 and 8 were seated in a circle reciting rhymes under Bharati's guidance. A silent group in the next room was undergoing physiotherapy.

Arunodayam is a home for abandoned mentally challenged children in Chennai. It was started by Mr. Iyyappan Subramanian, a student of CSIM. Affected by the loss of his own brother who was mentally challenged, Mr Iyyappan started a home for these children. He started with one child in 2003 and now has over 80 children.

Iyyappan was born and brought up in Edaiyur, a small village in Thiruvannur district, situated in Tamil Nadu, South India.

Children are referred by the Government - Child help line. While most of the children have been abandoned by their parents, some have lost their way from home. Sri Arunodayam attempts to reunite such children with their families.

On seeing us, the excited children wanted to play with us. We took about four children for a stroll in the campus.



Photo Credit: AK

ed to play with us. We took about four children for a stroll in the campus.

Anu, 5, wanted me to carry her and Sunithi, 4, insisted that I carry her too. Both were clinging to each other.

Probably it was the commonness that has brought them together. Both Anu and Sunithi were surrendered by their mothers to the government as they could not afford to take care of their challenged children. Sunithi was the fourth child to her parents, Anu was born to an unmarried mother. Anu was very cheerful and wanted to sit on my lap when I spoke to her. It was a wonderful feeling to be cuddled by these innocent children who were unaware of the emotions they churned in me.

"Johnny Johnny...Johnny.." said Saravanan, 5. I did not realize that he was trying to recite the popular rhyme until Chitra, the Administrator of Sri

Arunodayam, mentioned this to me. "He was a bed-ridden child when he came here. Now, he is independent. He selects his clothes each day and likes to watch television and dance too", beamed Chitra.

Mukthi, 2, was found along with her mother who is mentally ill. "Her mother is undergoing psychiatry treatment at Banyan and once she recovers, she will take custody of the child," says Thilak, psychologist at Sri Arunodayam.

Ankith, 10, enjoyed being photographed and kept combing his hair frequently. He was talkative and curious to learn what was written about him when I was going through his file. 'Child line' had found him stranded at the Central Railway Station and referred him to Sri Arunodayam in the year 2004. "I used to beg along with my brother in Punjab. One day, we returned home late and I got



Anu



Ankith



Ramjani



Sunithi

severely beaten up by our father. As we could not bear the pain, we left our home. My brother left me in a train and got off at a railway station. I was found alone by an old lady, who took me and sent me here. I want to grow up and work in office like Anna", he said pointing towards Iyyappan.

"After undergoing counseling and treatment, Ankith is like any other normal child. We plan to admit him in a residential school for normal children," said Iyyappan.

Ramjani, 16, who does not remember how he came to Chennai, kept repeating my name. I wondered if there was someone in his family who shared the same name and asked him. He did not have an answer. All he could say was, "I came from Meerut which is far away from here."

The children are provided physiotherapy, counseling, speech therapy and medical care. "Each child is unique. We struggled to meet the needs of the children and provide them with individual attention. Now, with the support of the community we are able to manage all these needs effectively", says Iyyappan.

Some of these children cannot perform the simplest of tasks that we seem to take for granted. Simple things like walking straight, eating or going to the toilet. A great amount of patience and tolerance is required to supervise and handle such children. I wondered how Iyyappan and his team of caregivers made it all sound so easy!

I came away with the sound of giggles in my ears, and a sense of awe.

— Marie Banu

"After undergoing counseling and treatment, Ankith is like any other normal child. We plan to admit him in a residential school for normal children,"

For more information about Sri Arunodayam please contact Mr. Iyyappan at Plot No 35, Sivananda Nagar, Kolathur, Chennai 600 099. Ph: 265 11450 / 265 10778. [www.sriarunodayam.org](http://www.sriarunodayam.org)

## "Community Support is Overwhelming"

Iyyappan Subramanian, all of 28 years, is a B.Sc. in Psychology, a CSIM fellow, and a guardian to more than 80 children. Among his several awards and achievements sits the impressive 'Change Looms' Fellowship. He was also among the twenty exceptional young leaders from all over the world selected as 2008 Youth Action Net Global Fellows. Iyyappan shares some compelling thoughts, and his warm-wise smile, with Conversations.

### Questions and Answers:

1) What do you find most challenging in your work?

Each child has specific needs which need to be addressed. It is a challenge to provide individual care. Out of eight special educators that we require for 30 of our children, we have been able to provide only five. Money is a major constraint as we are dependent mostly on individual donations.

2) Do you have enough support from the government and the society?

We have support from the government but this is not sufficient. The community support is overwhelming. It is because of this that we are able to take care of these children and provide them with therapy and education.

3) What do you feel about the mothers who abandon their children?

A mother will abandon her child only in utter despair.

tion. She does it either due to extreme poverty or because the father or family refuses to support her in raising such a child. This is escaping from responsibilities, which needs to be corrected.

4) Your work is daunting. Don't you ever feel stressed?

Yes, I do feel stressed at times. A visit to a temple or meditation helps me overcome my stress. Also I go to my farm and plant trees. Of course, spending time with the children here itself can be a great relaxation.

5) You provide home to many mentally challenged little girls. What will you do when they grow up?

It won't be easy, but we must do it. We have made a life-long commitment to the children. We are constructing a home for the pre-primary children. We have purchased land with the support of donors and plan to construct a building within the next three years. This will then become an 'after care' home and will take care of the girls when they grow up. We will ensure sufficient care and safety.

### Types of retardation with IQ levels

| Class                               | IQ       |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Profound mental retardation         | Below 20 |
| Severe mental retardation           | 20-34    |
| Moderate mental retardation         | 35-49    |
| Mild mental retardation             | 50-69    |
| Borderline intellectual functioning | 70-80    |





"I can do cartwheels," says my friend of two minutes, three-year-old Pugazh. "Do you want to see?"

Drinking water tanks are provided to each row of houses. A family is allocated 10 pots of water and each family takes its turn to manage the water distribution process. "During summer, the water that is supplied is not enough. We therefore go to the neighborhood to access water. Most of the disputes that arise in our neighborhood are because of water."



"I carry ten pots of water a day," says Bharati, 10, in English. "I go to school, I study in 6th class."



**R**ED, green and yellow kodams sit doilyly at the feet of the big black water tank by the roadside, swarming their way in a gaggle of young women in saris or gowns hange round the kodams, chattering. A crowd perked at the edge of one keeps pecking inside curiously. A few paces away, on the sand, are several small clumps of men playing cards. Dozens of boats, blue and orange and white, lie sprinkled at the edge, warming themselves in the mellow sun.

On this Saturday afternoon by the Thiruvanniyur beach, at the entrance to the fisherfolk's slum, the air smells of fish—and of langur.

Till the kids arrive.

Fish from their views, curious about the camera and the red order, they run a muck around their mothers—and just two strangers. They want to be in every frame. "I can do cartwheels," says my friend of two minutes, three-year-old Pugazh. "Do you want to see?" he offers gleefully. Before I can respond, he has done two rounds.

I tell the women I want to write about them. "And my friend wants to take some pictures. I expect defiance, even suspicion. Then I smile. 'I'll tell you, she will speak well,' they say. A child skitters off to fetch Priya.

Priya emerges from the brown thatched maze and greets us with her dimpled smile. She is articulate and friendly—a fortunate catch. She begins to show us around the place while Pugazh follows us everywhere, along with a whole battalion of boisterous friends. Around a thousand families live in this little universe which starts up perhaps ends—opposite the Venkateswara Temple at the tip of the Kappam Beach Road. Hundreds of fortified huts struggle over a kilometer's stretch along the shore, within a few meters of the sea. This has been their universe for generations. One way or another, everyone here belongs to the fishing community. While most men go fishing, most women are fish vendors.

Priya, all of 21, lives with her husband Saravann and her two children—Rahul and Thibhi (13 years and 11 years old, much-crashed, water-and-wind and brother-and-sister in a small green house. Here is one of the few cemented structures that stand out among the ragged thatched-roof. Priya got married when she was 18 and has completed her 10th.

Saravann, quite essentially a fisherman, now doubles as a courier boy. "He is paid two rupees for each courier packet that he delivers. When there is no fishing, this income helps us," she says. He studied up to 12th standard and can speak English. Priya adds proudly. "For the past two months I have been learning to drive so that I can also earn some income for my family." We see on the main Priya's stand out for us in the cemented common area of the neighborhood.

We are distracted by a sudden cacophony behind us. We turn around to realize it is coming from a megaphone sitting atop a rusted, rickety Maruti 800. "Pain, pain! Cure for all joint pain and back pain!" it blares. The ad is not recorded, its delivery live by the driver who is holding a mike to his mouth. Women crowd around the car, one immediately trying the bulb on her knees.

Priya tells us that most of the houses do not have toilets and bathing rooms. If a house does have the facilities, it is reserved for the women. Men and children go out to the washroom. There is a common toilet in the neighborhood. Each household spends up to Rs. 100 every six months to clear their septic tank. Bath water flows through open drains. Waste is strewn all over the beach since there is no garbage collection system.

Drinking water tanks are provided to each row of houses. A family is allocated 10 pots of water and each family takes its turn to manage the water distribution process. "During summer, the water that is supplied is not enough. We therefore go to the neighborhood to access water. Most of the disputes that arise in our neighborhood are because of water. There are no cases of abuse or domestic violence here," Priya tells us. "I carry ten pots of water a day," says Bharati, 10, in English. "I go to school, I study in 6th class," she says while calmly posing for the shots. Once she has answered our questions, she starts to walk, carrying her kodam the way a mother carries her infant.

Pugazh kept hitting me while I talk to Priya. He is too young to know about the voice recorder which he thought was a mobile phone.

"Tsunami has not affected our lifestyle in any way. We were away only for a while. We were not provided any relief compensation or houses although our homes were damaged. Our lives depend on the sea and so we continue to live here," Priya says.

All the children attend school and a local NGO runs a tuition centre in the neighborhood. Priya teaches two children and charges a nominal fee of Rs. 75 each.

When we were a boat to leave the slum, we were hit by a wind storm who has blown to wind in its dock in front of his bicycle, and dozens of small plastic bags hanging from the roof. He tells us the bags contain chocolate and mixture, balloons and toys—a mobile petty shop. "I come here once in two days and sell all the balloons, sweets and other things," he says even while his sister is packing up. The handmade rainbow windmill is for five rupees a piece.

Priya gives me her mobile number and asks me if we would come tomorrow. I tell her we just might. I feel I have only just peeped into the water.

—Marie Banu

# An evening with

An inspiring encounter with the fisherfolk near Thiruvanniyur. Priya shares her life stories with Marie Banu



Photo credit: AK



"Pain balm! Cure for all joint pain and back pain!"



"I come here once in two days and sell balloons, sweets and other eatables"



"Our lives depend on the sea and so we continue to live here"



## Quick Facts

As per 2006 data, Tamil Nadu is having a long coastline of 1076 kms, assuming the coastline of 7.80 inches Marine Fishermen population. As per 2001 data, there are 84 fisherman villages along the coast of Tamil Nadu of which 42 are in Chennai City, 28 are in the northern part of City upto Marol and 11 in the south upto Oran. According to a recent count there are 26,182 fisherman households with an average household size of 3.1. They live in 31,888 puccas as well as kulcha structures of which 16,482 are in Chennai, 8459 in northern part of CMA, and 2147 in the southern part of CMA. The growth of population among fisherman has increased by 9% between 2000 and 2005 and thus this trend is likely to continue. All present fisherman housing is dealt by Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) and Fisheries Department.



# A Lovely Autumn

More than a hundred women between 65 to 110 years of age find cheer and care in a home near the beach



Saraswathi



Saroja



Chandra



Rajalakshmi

Little did we know that a famous chocolate drink could find its potential brand ambassadors in an old age home! With 'Boost/Complan' in their shriveled hands and an engrossed discussion on a certain vamp in a TV soap, the word 'destitute' had lost its relevance. Wide and welcoming smiles greeted us visitors at Vishranthi - a home for destitute women.

Enterprising and committed aptly define Ms. Savithri, the 'Karta' of this home lives in the same premise and her passion to serve the elderly is a boon for hundreds of aged women today and has also served as an inspiration for many.

A slight suggestion of despair was seen when she remarked that only 10 out of 120 orphanages in Chennai offer free services. Quickly doing away with the melancholic tone, she gladly introduced us to her 'extended family' that grew from a mere 1 member in 1978 to over 100 today. This was the first home that was meant exclusively for destitute women. Today, there are 100 women (above 65 years of age) who are provided care and support here. Her sheer positivity and energy seemed to have seeped into the surroundings, right from the caged canaries to the support staff.

Fortunately, years of tears and pain gave way to these smiles and it was this transition that got the better of us. We requested her to allow us interview a few grannies who have interesting stories to share with us. "All have interesting stories to tell. Each one has come from varied backgrounds. Saraswathi, Saroja, Chandra and Rajalakshmi would be able to share with you their experiences", she added. Four confident grannies were to tell us about their interesting journeys. The first granny made the concept of age look funny given the fact that she was 109 years old! Saraswathi jokingly remarks, "I am 9 years old because I recount my age after 100".

She proudly recalls her meeting with Gandhiji and her courageous days as a freedom fighter. Armed with a sharp memory and the knowledge of 6 languages, she was truly a surprise package! She was married to Ramaswamy at the age of seven and had five children. "I lost my five children and my husband. But, what has affected me the most was when Mahatma Gandhi passed away", she said.

From the political lady we moved on to the film industry. Chandra took pride in being an integral part of all the leading ladies' dance troops in the south Indian film industry. Married to a dance teacher, her graceful and expressive gestures were proof enough of her artistic background. "I wake up at 5 in the morning and help in cutting vegetables for cooking. Morning routine includes a walk up to the beach and yoga and bhajans", she said.

Rajalakshmi's and Saroja's life were no colored film but a hard struggle. Their lives now revolve around prayers and their new found friends. "I have a large family here. We have enough food to eat and a comfortable place to stay. I was lonely while I was living with my husband and spent my time watching television and attending to my household chores. I am the priest for the Ganesha temple here and perform pooja in the morning and evening. It is much peaceful here", says Rajalakshmi.



Savithri Vaithi

Vishranthi has also opened its doors to young orphaned girls and mentally challenged women. We met young and vibrant teenage girls all equally talented and focused yet conscious about being photographed, clearly defining innocence. They were all single parent children who are provided educational support and residential care here. Vijayalakshmi, pursuing her BBA in DB Jain College in Chennai says, "I want to become a District Collector". All the girls are provided free education at Avvai home and have a full time warden Mrs. Gomathy to take care of them. They are allowed to visit their relatives only during the summer vacation.

Vishranthi also offers medical care for senior men and women. Short stay home facilities are offered to those who have their children living in abroad for a brief while.

Even when memories of their grey past creep in, more than one extends her hand in support. When these hands also seem insufficient, they look up to 'Amma'. All Ms. Savithri needs to do is hug them and the wrinkles on their face changes from those of sadness to those of happiness. The bond that these women share with each other and with Amma goes much deeper than their family ties. This home has made these women live a life of dignity and not one of sympathy. Their varied skills are put to use in appropriate areas. One of them commented while we were leaving, 'We have played almost all roles in life except that of a free-spirited woman. We are blessed that we have got this opportunity now'. And rightly so, it is the spirit of life that keeps Vishranthi alive.

—Yogini & Marie Banu



Photo credit: AK

For more information about Vishranthi Charitable Trust, contact Ms. Savithri Vaithi at: 28, A. V. M. Rajeswari Gardens, M. G. R. Salai, Palavakkam, Chennai 600 041. Ph: 2449 0972/6634.

# NGOs, the Sound of Silence

Over the years, Indian NGOs have been confronting with serious limitations to their freedom of intensification. The rise and role of NGOs in sustainable development in vital social areas made them indispensable for national progress. At times NGOs are contrasted with social movements. Many people say that the most difficult question about the independence of NGOs is whether they come under legislative influence. Theoretically NGOs may perhaps appear to be independent, when they design their own programs, but government influence can arise indirectly if the programs are designed towards government grants or contracts.

There is a grand variety of ways in which NGOs are planned. The typical model is of a membership organization, coordinated in a geographically-defined chain of command. Individual people work in local groups, which coordinate in districts and then have a headquarters in the capital cities. Gener-

**Over 1 million NGOs are registered in India working for various causes. They include -**

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Religious                | 26.5% |
| Community/Social Service | 21.3% |
| Education                | 20.4% |
| Sports/Culture           | 17.9% |
| Health                   | 6.6%  |
| Others                   | 7.5%  |

ally, the grass roots and community organizations clearly refer solely to the local level. Much as observers wish to gain greater understanding by defining different categories of NGOs, it is not possible to do so. This may be interpreted as the choice between small-scale change achieved directly through projects and large-scale change promoted indirectly through influence on the bureaucratic system. But, despite their differences, both operational and campaigning NGOs need to engage in



fund-raising, mobilization of work by supporters, organizing excellent events, cultivating the media and administering a center of operations. There are also more subjective variables, such as the professional skill, knowledge and experience of the personnel working for the NGOs.

NGOs incessantly work more in the

countryside providing humanitarian relief and development assistance in various states of our country. As they carry out their work, they face many challenges and threats. In many occasions, governments and local groups deny them access to the targeted segments. Donors also subject these NGOs to political pressure, lessening their organizational independence. Some NGOs uncritically embrace opinionated interventions which act as hindrance in dealing with emerging crisis situations. Non-governmental organizations need healthy relationships with the public to meet their goals.

There is also an increasing awareness that management techniques are crucial to project success in non-governmental organizations. In such a situation, NGOs in India make use of the explosion in global communication facilities and transnational community networks to achieve the set goals. It is estimated that NGOs and faith-based organizations have been contributing more than forty

percent of services in India. They create employment and support in poverty alleviation there by contributing to the growth of the economy.

The lack of good data on NGOs should change and more attention should be given. Scholars say the NGO sector tends to grow rapidly in India while we are recovering from economic recession.

The growing stature of NGOs in development areas is absolutely a proof for the positive outcome of the social endeavors. It is worth to mention that civil society development and capacity building are integrally linked to the functioning of NGOs. In a wider view of democracy, one can totally legitimize the role of NGOs in nation building.

—C.R. Bhaskaran  
Founder, Neethiyin Kural

## Benefiting from Social Entrepreneurship in India

The Indian scene is full of possibilities and challenges. The country possesses quite good human resources, and has made good progress in achieving scientific and technological capabilities. The business management education is also quite good in India. After liberalization of economy in early nineties, there is significant growth in Indian economy. Despite these positive factors, the social and environmental problems are increasing year after year. Another limitation in India is general dearth of multidisciplinary thinking on these problems. India needs extensive application of multidisciplinary approaches and entrepreneurial energy in social and environmental sectors. The challenge is: How to have more number and better quality of social entrepreneurs in the country?

Social entrepreneurship, although an old field of practice, is a new and emerging field of systematic knowledge and learning. The growth in social entrepreneurship should not be left to chance. In his famous book "Innovation and Entrepreneurship", Peter Drucker writes: "... everyone who can face up to decision making can learn to be an entrepreneur and behave entrepreneurially. Entrepreneurship, then, is behavior rather than personality trait. And its foundation lies in concept and theory rather than in intuition".

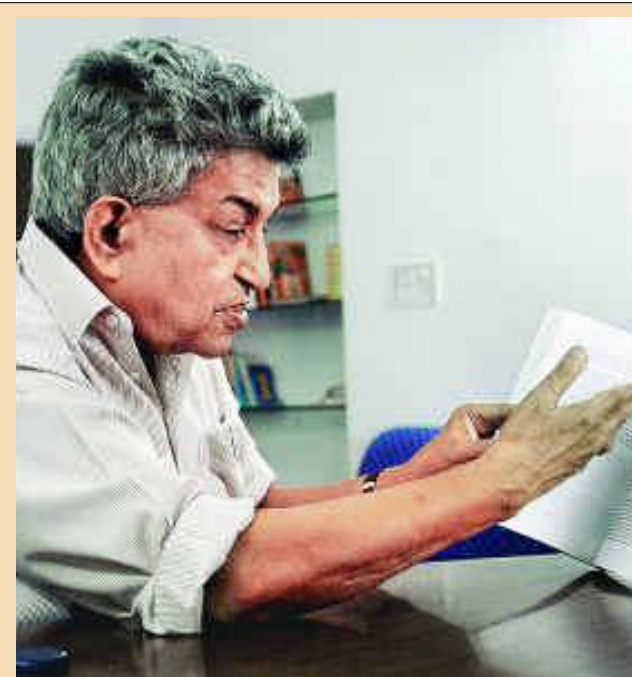
Even if we concede some role for personality factors, a large number of selected people can be trained to be entrepreneurs.

Extending this logic further, most people who can combine a spirit of social service and entrepreneurial behavior can learn and develop themselves as social entrepreneurs. It is important that this field of practice develops as a knowledge-based practice, rather than just a random occurrence based on 'hits or miss' approaches and intuition. Furthermore, when social entrepreneurial education and training is spreading in other countries, there is growing need to promote such education in India also.

CSIM has pioneered social entrepreneurship education in India. It offers part time and full time courses on social entrepreneurship that enables socially passionate individuals to evolve as Social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurship can draw and adapt much of its knowledge from the fields of business entrepreneurship, and social and environmental sciences. Social entrepreneurship, as a special type of leadership, can flourish here only if its value is recognized by a significant section of Indian society, especially the policy makers, media and the other important players. If this happens, it can create new waves of opportunities, strategies, approaches, and impacts in the direction of sustainable development.

If you feel that social entrepreneurship and social businesses are important for India, how should they be enriched, strategized, and promoted? Please send in your comments to [csim.conversations@gmail.com](mailto:csim.conversations@gmail.com)

—K.L. Srivastava



## Relentless sharing & social entrepreneurs

OUR life is in its fullness when we begin and continue giving eternally. Giving gives you freedom and the very best choice to exercise. Caring and sharing with others is the ultimate in living the present continuously.

Always connect your mind with your heart and act to achieve peace and happiness. Look inside of you to discover your energy, potential and goodness and bring out profusely the unconditional love and compassion to one and all everywhere.

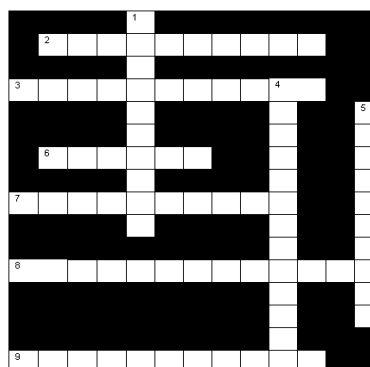
Being conscious of your inner sub conscience, the collective consciousness

and the all pervasive universal super consciousness. Then, you become an inexhaustible flow of divine energy, divine intent and divine manifestation.

Network, Network, Network all the time with people. Network is ultimately the Net-Worth of an individual. Also try to become a servant leader and abhor power leadership. Thus you become a social entrepreneur and a darling amongst masses.

Salutations to Sadha Sivamayam.

—P.N. Devarajan  
Founder - CSIM



- ACROSS**
- 2 The branch of medical science that deals with diseases and problems specific to old people (10)
  - 3 Knowledge or skill developed by a learning process (11)
  - 6 Physical, mental, and social well-being (6)
  - 7 Maintaining clean, hygienic circumstances (10)
  - 8 ----- development means meeting today's needs and planning the country's growth without creating problems for future generations (11)
  - 9 Your surroundings, and how they influence your development. (11)

- DOWN**
- 1 When a person's physical or mental condition keeps him or her from being able to function in an expected manner (10)
  - 4 Cities growing as people move from the rural areas in search of better jobs and living conditions (12)
  - 5 The labor, task or duty that is one's accustomed means of livelihood (10)



# A different Cut

Director Radhamohan subtly weaves socially sensitive frames into his commercial films. He shares his worldview with Radha Jagan and Latha Suresh.

**F**ILM Director Radhamohan, has exploited the medium of cinema well and has woven a social touch into commercial films. His dexterity to blend humor, strong social messages and serious themes has made him a "Responsible filmmaker". Till date he has directed four films, out of which three of them - Azhagiya Theeye, Mozhi and Abhiyum Naanum - are critically acclaimed and are box-office hits. Director Radhamohan talks to Radha Jagan & Latha Suresh.

## What inspired you to direct Mozhi?

When I was in school, I used to see a deaf and a mute girl in our colony. I always used to wonder how she would communicate with others and what was on her mind. Somehow, her image never left me. It motivated me to direct Mozhi. I enrolled in a sign language course conducted by Ability Foundation to understand the intricacies of communication amongst the hearing impaired.

## Do you intentionally wish to convey a social message through your movies?

No, I am just a story teller. I am just doing what I like to do and I am sensitive to the needs of the society. My stories happen to be about a deaf and dumb girl, or about a father and daughter or about a mentally ill person. I make no conscious effort to be different from other film makers. In Mozhi, I did not preach about the way one should treat a physically challenged person. But the message has reached the audience. I was overwhelmed by their reactions and the way it sensitised them. Similarly, in Abhiyum Naanum, I highlighted the fact that parents cannot take their children for granted. Parents have to accept them as individuals and give them the required space to grow and live the lives they choose. Many parents have changed their attitude on seeing this movie and they have con-

veyed it to me at various forums.

## Any inspiring moments?

I was a jury member for the International Ability Film Festival. They received over 300 nominations. Each film was of 60 seconds duration and was based on the theme 'Equal opportunities'. Each film had a story to tell and was so inspirational, that I can never ever forget that experience.

## What is your perspective on solving Social issues?

Social Issues have always been there. New ones come up with the changing times. We must learn to address social issues in the context of the present day scenario. For instance, we all know that child labor is wrong. There is no second opinion to it. But, how do we address it? Identifying the issue does not solve it. We have to arrive at solutions, alternatives. Simply telling the parents, children and employers that child labor is illegal or wrong would not suffice. We have to emphasize the importance of education to the parents and the children and ensure that the children get the right kind of education without causing a financial strain on the poverty stricken family. We have to learn to emulate the good aspects from the world without affecting our fundamentals.

## What do you think should be the role of media with regard to social issues?

Creating the right kind of awareness is the prime responsibility of the media. It should talk about buildings and public places being disabled friendly. How many buildings in our city have ramps or disabled friendly lifts? I remember a bright disabled boy, who had to discontinue his schooling as his classroom was located in the second floor. The school did not have a ramp or a lift. The boy and his parents requested the

management to move the class to the ground floor which they refused. So he quit school. Not only has the boy been deprived of the joys of schooling, the school has also lost an opportunity to make itself disabled friendly. This is the sad status of affairs in our society.

## What do you think is the social sector's responsibility towards the media?

Many individuals have been sidelined due to various reasons in the society. They may be physically or mentally challenged, mentally ill or whatever be the reason, inclusion of all into the mainstream society should be achieved. For this, we welcome the experts in each field to use media as a platform and reach out to the public and emphasize the facts that all are equal. These experts should write and share facts to create awareness amongst people. This would educate and motivate society to understand the importance of mainstreaming socially discriminated individuals.

## Your aspirations?

I want to sustain this effort in social inclusion with open mindedness and play a responsible role. I would be happy if I am recognized as a responsible filmmaker.



Ability Foundation works for the empowerment, integration and rights of people with disabilities. Visit [www.abilityfoundation.org](http://www.abilityfoundation.org) to know more about their work

## Support Corner

### Sponsorship Support

Hi, I am Kalaivani, Founder of "Nightingale Social Trust (NEST)". Currently NEST is functioning at 3 different centers situated near Thirumullaivoyal benefiting 125 students from low-income communities. Can you sponsor one of the following at our 3 Tuition centres?  
**Rent** - Rs. 700 Per Month  
**Tutor's Salary** - Rs. 1,000 Per Month  
**Nutritional snacks** - Rs. 1,000 per month (Rs.35 per day)  
**Sponsor a medical camp**  
Rs. 1,250 per camp  
Please get in touch with me at No.5, Pillayar Koil Street, Thirumullaivoyal, Phone: 9962993947, 9345811260

### Need a place.

My sister and I, Rukmini & Kalyani, are visually challenged. We have started Jeeva Vriksham Trust, and are planning to launch a monthly Braille magazine shortly. Unfortunately, we are being denied an office space. Can you spare 200 sq. feet for our project? Contact us at 9444208961 / 9444208963

### Support children with HIV

Hi I am Balaji, Founder of Real Charitable Trust. Providing care and support to children infected with HIV is my mission. I run a home at Porur with 8 children and also provide financial support to HIV infected children who are staying with their family in rural areas. I started the Home just 4 months ago and you could contribute what ever that you feel would be valued by my children. I have conducted over 100 awareness programs on prevention of HIV/AIDS and am a certified trainer. Do you want me to spread the message in your workplace? Contact me at 9600115782

### Tree Planting

I am Manimaran and I have planted over 12,000 trees in and around Chennai and am maintaining each one of them. Are you interested in a tree planting campaign? I can supply any number of tree saplings and also maintain them on your behalf. Also, if you could donate a computer/laptop, it will help me to document my work in a more professional way. Contact me at 9940726790

### Eye camps

I am Shivakumar, a trained Optometrist with 15 years of experience and founder of Alayam Eye Care foundation. I organize a unique Refractive Error Camp, which has enabled corrective vision to more than 125,000 children in Tamilnadu, 350,000 adults in slums and rural areas and 100 families with various physical and other disabilities over the past 5 years. I also have the spectacles delivered at the doorsteps for a very subsidized cost. Interested in organizing a camp in your neighbourhood? It takes Rs.1000 to sponsor one camp Contact me at 9840369969

### ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD

1. Disability, 2. Geriatrics, 3. Education, 4. Urbanisation, 5. Employment, 6. Health, 7. Sanitation, 8. Sustainable, 9. Environment.

### Computers Required

Readers, if you know someone who can spare a few computers, why don't you help these NGOs who are in dire need of computers? Their contact details are -

**B. Vincent Paul. Director-CHHASE**  
Thomiar street, Pannur village & post, Tiruvallur district, - 602108  
Ph. 9443991504

**Tamilnadu Handicapped Federation Charitable Trust,**  
No:21 AA, Lake View Road, Kottur, Chennai-85.  
Ph:32927664  
Mob: 9444115936

**Yoga Amirtham Charitable Trust**  
Koodakovil, Thirumangalm taluk, Kalikudi block Madurai District.  
Ph: 9344118708

**R. Arokiajulian**  
No.1c, Thanthai periyar street, Osur village & post, Vallalar nagar, Marudhadu (via), Vadalur - 607 303  
Ph: 04142 - 260312  
Mobile: 9865186735

**M. Krishna Rao**  
National Association for the Blind, TN State Branch Plot no. 12, Association road, I lane, Madhavaram, Chennai - 600060.