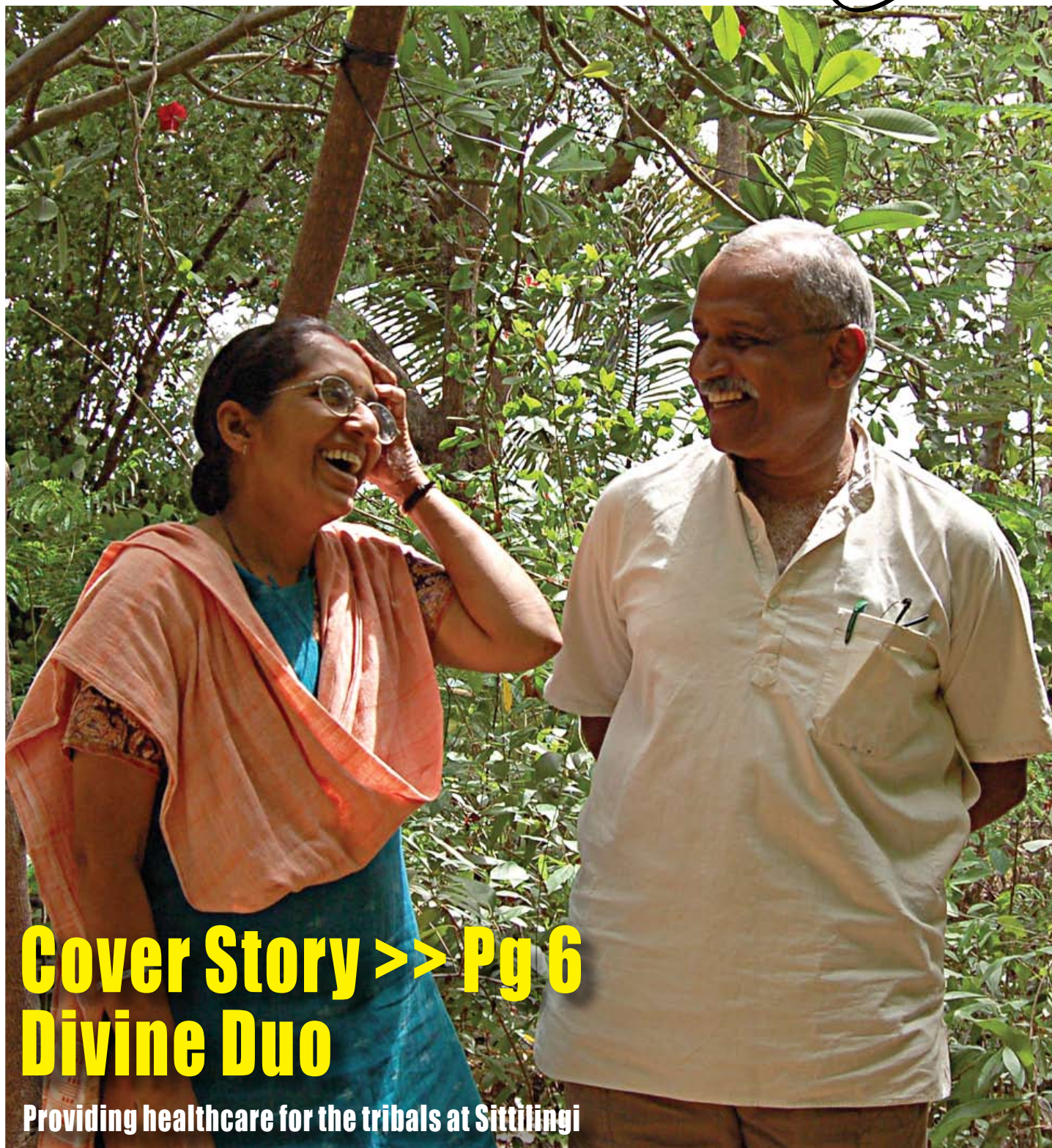


Conversations

A Chronicle of Social Currents

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Cover Story >> Pg 6 Divine Duo

Providing healthcare for the tribals at Sittilingi

Photo: Marie Banu

From the Editor

Dear Friend,

The root for 'motivation' is 'move' and movement is change. Ask yourself right now: "Am I moving forward, or am I standing still?"

Comfort zones put padlocks on the doors to growth, discovery, and adventure in your life, but the three keys that will unlock these doors are discipline, hard work and faith.

Change can truly be a wonderful gift. It can recharge your emotional battery and nourish your soul. Just do it! Choose change and let it make a positive difference in your life. A cautionary inner voice will tell you not to rock the boat; to stay on the path of least resistance, but your heart would tell otherwise.

Listen to your heart. Filter out the old static and tune in something new.

Challenge your assumptions, identify and study people already doing what you want to do.

Read the stories of *changemakers* featured in this issue. These are people who have found the true direction of their life.

Happy reading!

—PN Devarajan

inside



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Ramesh's effort in empowering rural women and children



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About Pratham's hospice for the terminally ill



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"I consider a posting to be a role assigned to me by God in his Big Scheme of Things."

An exclusive interview with Shri. S.K. Dogra IPS



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COMMON TRAFFIC ERRORS

Photo: Lourdu Raj



Here are some road safety tips and common errors in driving:

Keep left allowing the vehicles from the opposite direction to pass.

Most of the time we drive from the middle of the road, until we see someone driving straight into us, then swerve to our respective lefts! This is the cause for most head-on accidents – when we fail to make way in time!

This problem is accentuated while negotiating bends and climbing up inclines when we don't see the opposite vehicle until it is already dangerously close.

Give way to all traffic on your right, especially at road junctions and roundabouts.

This is a golden rule. It is a 'right of way' rule. Following this one rule will not only prevent a majority of accidents but even remove

50% of contention and congestion on our roads, especially at unmanned junctions.

While turning left or right, give way to vehicles going straight.

Vehiclists stretching their arms and demanding those going straight to stop while they take the turn is a common sight on our roads!

While turning left, keep to the left side of the road and turn close to the left side of the road to which you enter.

We usually see people cutting a huge arc and driving right into the right most lane on the road.

Stick to the speed limit and remember that speed limit is related to the traffic condition.

Most don't know what the prescribed speed limit on their city roads is – in most

Indian cities this is 50kmph. They drive as fast as they can!

Remember that the stopping distance of your vehicle depends on the speed at which you are driving.

This is the reason why high speeds and acceleration should be avoided in school and other similar zones.

Two wheelers are meant only for two. Do not carry children additionally.

Additionally, it is very risky to carry children who are not old enough to wrap their arms around the parent/ward and hold tight on two-wheelers.

Never drive in a zig-zag manner.

This is a note of special importance to two-wheelers who suddenly cut into the front of a four-wheeler and disappear as quickly. Lucky ones aside, this is very risky, we are putting our safety

INFORMATION PROVIDED
BY THE COMMISSIONER
OF POLICE, CHENNAI FOR
THE MONTH OF JULY 2012

Loss of lives due
to accidents

121

No. of accidents
reported

907

NUMBER OF CASES
BOOKED FOR TRAFFIC
VIOLATION: 316,831

- Signal violation - 21,672
- Wrong side driving - Nil
- Over speeding - 8145
- Violation of one way rule - 18,088

ADD SPARKLE TO THE SEASON WITH A
TOUCH OF THE ORIENT AT **China Town**
A SIP OF SCINTILLATING SPAIN AT **Zara**
A TINGE OF EXOTIC THAILAND AT **Benjarong**
A MESMERISING SENSE OF NORTH INDIA
AT **COPPER CHIMNEY** A SPLASH OF COASTAL FRESHNESS
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Creating Opportunities in the Village

"My intentions were ridiculed. People openly asked if I was capable of doing these tasks. Today, I can say that I am a role model to at least one of my students."

Life throws in opportunities around you at any time. The ones that you pick up and the circumstances that lead you there ultimately shape your destiny," says Mr Ramesh, Founder, Annai Kanniyammal Educational Trust based in Endiyur village at Villupuram.

His is the story of an unanchored individual, whose life situations showed him the path ahead. Today, he is beating his own drums for the betterment of his village.

The son of a road mender and a home maker, he discontinued schooling after completing tenth standard. Later, he finished his Diploma in Computer Office Management. That was not it. He did his Diploma in Film Technologies and then in multimedia. "How connected or relevant were all these was not at all a concern then," smiles Ramesh.

At the age of 32, Ramesh founded a Trust in 2010 and named it after his mother as 'Annai Kanniyammal Educational Trust'. "After my mother's demise, I wanted to do something that will keep her name alive in my village. And thus, my Trust was born," he says.

Ramesh is very categorical about family's influence in the management of the Trust. Therefore, he decided to include only his brother in the Board of Trustees, so that he would carry forward the activities after his lifetime. "The other Board Members are my friends. They are the backbone of this Trust," exclaims Ramesh.

After my mother's demise, I wanted to do something that will keep her name alive in my village. And thus, my Trust was born.

In just two years, the Trust has grown to support 25 self-help groups, provide organic certificate to 200 farmers, and also coordinate 6 farmer clubs. The activities of the Trust are multifaceted. "Our objective is to show inclusion as a practicable principle. Education is being taken up as a primary concern, as it can equalize



opportunities for the next generation. From a Free Computer Education Centre in the village, we now run a film institute named 'Annai Kanniyammal Film Academy' that was started in March 2012. The Academy provides courses on direction, screenplay and camera, absolutely free of cost," says Ramesh.

With 40 students being guided by Ramesh in this institute, he has already chalked out a strategy to hone their skills. Within a short span, the Film Academy has garnered a lot of attention and popularity. My students can direct a short film if given the screenplay. They work out details like camera angles very well. In every student here, I see a young Ramesh. We are all eagerly looking forward to the documentary festival to be organized on 9th September, 2012, which will be judged by popular film directors," he says proudly.

Ask him about his inspiration, and you will be surprised with the reply. "Myself!" he says assertively.

Ramesh's early days were marked by discouragement and skepticism about his capabilities. This was perhaps the reason for his staunch belief in self. "My intentions were ridiculed. People openly asked if I was capable of doing these tasks. Today, I can say that I am a role model to at least one of my students," he adds.

Annai Kanniyammal Educational Trust also runs an Education Awareness Centre through which focused group discussions are organized regularly for the children in the village. These programmes aim at creating awareness about the need to educate the next generation. "If not for education, people can never be brought on a common platform. Like a mother is to birth, education is to personality," says Ramesh concernedly.

When asked about his education at



CSIM, he begins to mention the names that he would remember forever. "CSIM brought the biggest change in my career. I was introduced to myself as a better organized person. Today, I can confidently approach any stake holder, handle their queries and responses. Fundraising, that remained a dark matter to me, has become comprehensible and organizing programmes has become an enriching experience," explains Ramesh while thanking his good friend Balamurugan, who introduced him to CSIM.

He honestly admits his apprehensions about interviews such as these. "Exposure through CSIM has given me the confidence to face everything." Soon, he

If not for education, people can never be brought on a common platform. Like a mother is to birth, education is to personality.

delves in to share about his future plans: "I want to build a CBSE school in Endiyur and also a hospital. I want to show that CBSE schools can function efficiently in villages as well."

Given Ramesh's intentions to create a better tomorrow for his village, one would expect him to be received in a grandeur. But, it is not so. "Irrespective of what you do, jealousy and cynicism are bound to be there. I have learnt to live with them," he informs.

What is more contending to him is the fact that his ventures have opened numerous roads to interact with the students in the village. The volley ball and cricket matches, and the training programmes have had an immense impact on students' performance.

"I knew I was making a difference when a teacher spoke to me about her student's progress," he signs off.

—Shanmuga Priya. R

If you wish to support Annai Kanniyammal Educational Trust, please contact Ramesh at 9047145145.

The Madhuram Narayanan Center for Exceptional Children (MNC) is one of the pioneering institutions to offer specialized services in the area of early intervention for children with developmental disorders. Talking to Mr. S. Krishnan, an advisor of the organization, we get a bird's eye view of the institution, which right from its beginnings up to its latest contributions to the society has been setting the trends in this field.

MNC is the brain-child of Mrs. Jaya Krishnaswamy and Late Air Vice Marshal Krishnaswamy. After his retirement from the Indian Air Force, the couple decided to relocate to Chennai. It was here in the late eighties, while Air Vice Marshal Krishnaswamy was a consultant with the Sanmar Group and the Indchem Research Laboratories, that the idea for an organization working for children with developmental disabilities sprung up. The then Chairman of the Sanmar Group Mr. K.S. Narayanan had suggested that a school be opened for such children. After consultations with veterans such as Prof. Jeyachandran, who is considered as the father of early intervention in India, it was decided that a program on early intervention be started.

As this would be a first of its kind in the



state and probably in the country even, the team started gathering data on parenting patterns by talking to people from various walks of life, many of whom were also parents and grandparents of children with developmental disabilities. In 1989, the Upanayan Program was started. Systematic assessment of children's developmental milestones was done, based on which individualised training plans were formulated. 'Upanayan' means 'to lead along' and the program did just that, by engaging the parents at every stage.

Mr. Krishnan reaffirms that this program was tailored to suit the Indian sensibilities and it was evolved after testing a program which was heavily influenced by the western culture. Originally, incorporated as Ind Chem Foundation in 1991, the Upanayan Program was inaugurated by Mother Theresa. The current name was adapted in 1997.

MNC functions as a day-care center for infants and children aged up to six years of age. Their objectives are: Early Detection and Intervention; Empowering and rehabilitation of parents; Creating awareness about detection at birth;

Exceptionally Devoted to the Cause

"MNC takes up an integrated approach towards intervention. Parent-involvement is heavily incorporated into the regimen."

Research and development; and Outreach to all institutions that work on similar projects. Annually, a national workshop is held to bring together like-minded people from various parts of the country. Once in three years, an international conference is also held.

MNC takes up an integrated approach towards intervention. Parent-involvement is heavily incorporated into the regimen. A software called 'Upanita' has been developed to make a complete assessment of every child and to graph his/her progress as the year passes by. The parents sit through training sessions for the children and also attend separate training sessions wherein they are equipped to handle and



Originally from Salem, Mrs. Rajkumar used to be an outstation parent in 1990, travelling with her then little son (who has severe Cerebral Palsy) every few weeks to Chennai for therapy and training. In 1994, she settled with her family in Chennai and joined as a staff at MNC. Since 2007, she has been serving as Principal for this organization.

"I could see the positive changes in my son soon after he joined MNC. I realized that he could have been worse had he not been put through schooling here. Having been a part of this organization for several years now, I have sensed satisfaction in what I do every single day here," says Mrs. Priya Rajkumar.

She moves on to explain about the vocational training programs of MNC and about how keenly they work towards placing the children either in the right schools or in the right sheltered workshops wherein the children can lead their lives with as much independence as their conditions will allow them to be. She recalls with pride the students who have finished their tenth standard, twelfth standard, and even some who are now pursuing their college education. She urges parents to identify developmental delays in their children at the earliest and refer them for early intervention.

In developmental disabilities, early detection is as good as prevention. Let's take a cue today.

—Archanaa R.

of MNC. The organization is supported in its finances by both the Central as well as the State Government. While over 55 percent of the funds come from the government, the rest is collected through individual and corporate donations.

"The Tamil Nadu government has been exceptionally forthcoming in terms of supporting not only MNC but in several projects related to disabilities. Since it is essential to maintain a healthy and sustainable relationship with the children's families, a minimal contribution is collected from them as well. Even in that, the relatively richer families are encouraged to contribute the share of the relatively poorer ones," says Mr. Krishnan.

Mr. Krishnan mentions, not without a certain pride, that the organization is transparent and has successfully conducted its social audit too.

Towards the end of this conversation, Mr. Krishnan introduces the Principal of the School, Mrs. Priya Rajkumar. A parent herself, Mrs. Priya Rajkumar epitomises the parent-involvement in the intervention process and how it ultimately translates into the culture of this organization.

Madhuram Narayanan Center for Exceptional Children is located at 126, G N Chetty Road T Nagar, Chennai - 600017. Ph: 28151840. Email: mnc.chennai@gmail.com

PGDSIM 2012 Launch

The Center for Social Initiative & Management (CSIM), is a business school for social service professionals. CSIM is a learning centre par excellence that grooms social entrepreneurs. We work to reach the concept of social entrepreneurship and the associated skills, to individuals belonging to various social sections, across the country.

We inaugurated the 12th batch of the one-year Post Graduate Diploma in Social Initiative and Management on 20th July 2012. 12 Prospective Social Entrepreneurs enrolled for the programme. All were fresh graduates with Sociology, Psychology and Commerce background. With an intention to launch their own charity, they have enrolled for the one year program so that they gain adequate knowledge about the development sector before embarking on their own initiatives.

Mrs. S. Eva Rosalin, Co-Ordinator, CSIM welcomed the gathering and introduced the chief guests Mr. Vijayakumar, and Mr. P N Subramaniam to the students. In his inaugural address Mr. Vijayakumar, a visually impaired leading

advocate from Madras High Court said, "Studying in CSIM is a great opportunity for everyone. I have been associated with this institution for several years, and I am happy to be part of the inauguration. I am sure that as aspiring social entrepreneurs this programme would be of immense help. My best wishes to each one of you."

Mr. P.N. Subramaniam spoke to each of the students and enquired about their education and future plans. He said, "I am sure that this course would be beneficial as all of you are interested in social work."

Following this, Ms. Marie Banu, Head-Communications, CSIM welcomed the students and advised them to pursue the course with zeal. "Your intention might be to get placed at the end of the course, but your focus should be on learning as much as you can during this one-year period. Once you have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills, placement will automatically follow," she assured.

Ms. Latha Suresh, Director, CSIM provided an overview of the one-year program.

—Latha Suresh



Battle Of The Buffet 2012



Give India organized the launch of the Joy of Giving Week 2012 logo at a press meet on 25th September 2012 at Madras Cricket Club.

The Battle of the Buffet (BOB) event is being coordinated by Chennai Mission and CSIM on 6th October 2012 at Chennai Trade Centre, Nandambakkam as part of the Joy of Giving Week celebrations.

"The BOB event is a fundraiser for NGOs and we are coordinating this for the fourth consecutive year in Chennai. Last

year, this event raised Rs. 1.4 crores benefitting 51 NGOs and this year we aim to mobilise Rs. 2.5 crores and support over 100 NGOs across the state," said Mr. Mahadevan, Managing Director of Oriental Cuisines Pvt. Ltd. and Founder, Chennai Mission.

"Leading 4 and 5 star hotels in the city would be offering their choicest dishes to over 2000 guests. An entertainment programme is being planned and there will be an auction of Bollywood and

Kollywood movie memorabilia as well," he added.

Marie Banu of CSIM spoke on the participation of NGOs and mentioned that this event has proved to be unique in the history of fundraising for charities.

"While NGOs spend more than 20 percent of the funds that they raise to organise an event, the Battle of the Buffet is a great opportunity for them to raise funds without spending a single rupee. Most importantly, this involves zero-risk



for the NGO as the event is a sure success each year. All that they need to do is to request their donors to buy a dinner coupon for Rs. 5000," she said.

Over 65 NGOs have registered for the event till date and many more are yet to register.

If you wish to participate, please contact Sophia Shalom at 9840740854 or Marie Banu at 9884700029. You may also write to info@battleofbuffet.org. For more information please visit www.battleofbuffet.org



"We came here with no plans, and still do not have any. We respond to people and hope to give power to the people."

Dr. Regi and Dr. Lalitha, fondly addressed by the tribals as 'G' and 'Tha' are the founders of the Tribal Health Initiative (THI) at Sittilingi, a village situated on the hillocks, about 100 kilometers from Salem. Regi is a surgeon and an anesthetist and Lalitha is a gynecologist. Both pursued their medical degree at Allepey Medical College and together decided to work towards providing health care for the tribal communities.

Here is an interesting story on how they started their work at Sittilingi and about the tribes who live here.

"After completing our Medical degree in 1987, we worked in Gandhigram hospital at Dindugal for a while. We wanted to not just work in a hospital, but instead move one step ahead. After we had our first child, I left Lalitha behind, and visited tribal areas across India. This is because we learnt that the tribals were neglected due to inaccessibility and lacked health care facilities," said Regi.

Trekking with just a backpack, Regi George visited several tribal hamlets to locate an ideal place to launch their mission—providing health care for the tribal communities. During his journey, he visited Sittilingi valley and the surrounding Kalvarayan and Sitteri Hills which were inhabited primarily by the tribal people. These tribes were known as 'Malavasis' meaning hill people and their occupation was rain fed agriculture.

After studying several tribal hamlets, Regi learnt that Sittilingi had a high rate of infant mortality (147/1000) and maternal mortality. The nearest hospital was at Harur town, the taluk headquarters, situated 48 kilometers away from Sittilingi, and to find one with

surgical facilities meant a journey to Dharmapuri which is located 100 kilometers away. The area was remote and badly served by public transport.

"Both of us being nature lovers decided to serve the tribal communities who lived here as we believed that there should be more meaning for our work. Also, Tamil Nadu was then one among the five backward states in India," said Regi.

In 1993, Regi and Lalitha set up a hut in a small piece of forest land. They had two cots that were made out of wood and ropes which they used to treat out-patients. In the mornings, they would take the cots and set up a clinic under a tamarind tree. The room in the hut doubled up as an operation theatre and a labor room. This is how Tribal Health Initiative got operational here.

"Action Aid, an international non-governmental organization, provided us funds to construct a 10-bedded hospital and a place for us to stay. We also got support from our friends and well-wishers. By 1997, we had established a full-fledged hospital with an operation theatre. But still, not all the tribals were convinced that we were doctors," he quipped.

"What did you do to gain their confidence?" I asked.

"We visited villages by motorbike and the tribals used bullock carts to attend our meetings. We spoke to the communities about the need for health auxiliaries and health workers in each of the 21 villages. We organized awareness campaigns and used flash cards to communicate to them. Once they were convinced, we requested them to send educated girls to our hospital to get trained as health workers. Today, THI has a lot of tribal girls trained as health workers, health

auxiliaries, and hospital staff," replied Regi.

The Health Auxiliaries are women who have been chosen by the tribal communities. Once in a month, these health auxiliaries visit the hospital at Sittilingi for reporting and training. They are offered advice on nutrition, hygiene, birth practices, and simple ailments.

Public transport in the hilly areas being a major issue, THI also operates ambulances around the clock. These ambulances are of immense help especially during deliveries as the villages are located far away from the hospital. The ambulance service is offered to the tribals free of cost.

In-patient care including surgery or delivery is also offered free for the tribals as it is supported by Tamil Nadu Government scheme, while a nominal amount is charged for the non-tribals.

"How did the tribals attend to child births earlier?" I asked curiously.

"Earlier, it was the mother or the elder sister who attended to the delivery. The pregnant



mother would be taken to the backyard and laid on a sack. The placenta would not be cut until it fully came out and both the mother and child would remain outside the house for seven days in a temporary thatched structure. Being a hilly region, the weather was not conducive for both the mother and the child. This was the reason for high level of infant mortality and maternal mortality amongst the tribals," replied Regi heaving a sigh.

"Today, the health workers form the backbone of THI. They are able to diagnose and treat common problems, assist in the operating theatre, conduct deliveries, care for inpatients and go out to the villages for antenatal and child health checkups," he added.

While conversing, Regi was informed about an emergency in the hospital. While he left to



attend to a scan, I took a walk around the campus. I had the least feeling that I was visiting a hospital. The entire place was filled with greenery and the ambience was soothing. The staff were cheerful and even the patients, who were waiting for their treatment, were pleasant to interact with.

The hospital staff, guests, trainees, and tribal in-patients were being served food near the kitchen. I spontaneously took my serving and sat in the tiffin shed quietly observing the others who were enjoying their meal.

Around 2 PM Regi and Lalitha arrived to have their lunch.

"You seem to be having late lunch?" I remarked.

"We try to attend to our out-patients before the bus arrives at 1:30 PM as the next bus is scheduled only around 4 PM," said Lalitha smilingly.

It was obvious that she hid her tiredness behind the smile and I was not surprised at her commitment.

Tribal Health Initiative runs a full-fledged 24-bed primary care hospital and has extended its services to conduct education programmes and outreach clinics in all of the 21 villages situated in the area. Further, newer initiatives such as Organic Farming and Tribal Craft have also been launched.

"It is 20 years since you came here. What are the major changes that you observe among the tribals now?" I asked Regi.

"They are very simple people. They used to



consume a lot of millets earlier, now they have chilli chicken," answered Regi jokingly.

"What about the future plans of Tribal health Initiative?" I enquired.

"We came here with no plans, and still do not have any. We respond to people and hope to give power to the people. That's all and nothing else!" replied Regi spontaneously.

I bid adieu to the divine duo and enroute visited a few villages where the health auxiliaries lived. "The community recognizes me as a nurse and come to me when they need medication. I have a better social image now and feel proud to be part of the Tribal Health Initiative," said Vijaya.

Winding through the twisty roads and crossing the forest area I wondered when I would get to visit this place again and spend a day with the divine duo. A great inspiration for social work!

—Marie Banu

Photos: Marie Banu

If you wish to support Tribal Health Initiative, please contact Dr. Regi George and Dr. Lalitha at +919488344325 or write to regilalitha@gmail.com

Both of us being nature lovers decided to serve the tribal communities who lived here as we believed that there should be more meaning for our work.

Divine Duo

A candid chat with the pathfinder

We are not Indrajith

It was purely my father's vision, who used to always say: 'it is very important to ensure primary education to children if we want a better future for humanity'.

TSG, this is how this multi-dimensional man is known amongst his circle. T S Gopalan is one of the leading advocates in India; he never takes pride in saying that one of his juniors Mr. Ibrahim Kalifullah is presently the Judge of Supreme Court of India.

TSG is a role model and idol to many budding professionals across the country. An average student at college, he cheerfully mentions that Law College is a comedy spent and passed. After completing his Post Graduation in Madras Law College in 1960, he joined King & Patel where he met his God Father Mr. C. Duraisamy, an influential and renowned barrister. In 1976, TSG came out of King & Patel to start his own venture T. S. Gopalan & Co, which has created lot of giants out of ordinary men. In 1992, he started a primary school in his native village Thiruvavur which has got smart classrooms but charges only thousand rupees per year.

An excerpt of an interview with Mr. T.S. Gopalan

Although you argue for management, you are known for fairness. Many unions come to you for consultation. What is your view about today's trade union and the labour force?

In today's environment, I feel there is no tolerance amongst the management and they are not sensitive to the problems of the labour force. I am personally against the contract labour system, which is not right. I strongly feel that a contractor is one who robs butter from the leper. My heart beats for the labourers.

Nowadays, a lot of debate is going on regarding the Indian Educational System, what is your view on this?

The Government control (rules & regulations) on schools does not talk about the quality of education. Government does not mind spoken English as a necessary skill. I see India's education system as a stumbling block towards its objectives of achieving inclusive growth. A common feature in all government schools is the poor



quality of education, with weak infrastructure and inadequate pedagogic attention. We should focus on value based education system.

The last couple of decades have seen renowned persons opening up Engineering or Medical colleges, what interested you to open up a primary school?

To navigate a fast-changing world that presents new opportunities and challenges, we need to nurture each child to become a self-directed learner; to build character with sound values and good habits.

My father inspired me to start this school, which has now got 450 students, 20 teachers, and a correspondent. It was purely my father's vision, who used to always say: 'it is very important to ensure primary education to children if we want a better future for humanity'.

We have heard that your school is the only school in India and probably in the world, which attracted a Nobel laureate. Can you please elaborate the incident?

On October 2nd, every year we organize a get-together. The highlight of this event is that we raise funds for school children



to enable them continue their education.

Any child who needs financial assistance can approach us with a bonafide letter from their institution mentioning its fee.

Mr. Sidney Altman, a Nobel prize winner for chemistry in the year 1989, who is also my elder son's mentor, heard about our school and about our initiatives. When he visited India, he spent considerable time with our students and even donated for infrastructural developments.

Many MNCs are investing in India and thereby a significant industrial growth, this has led to a greater mobility of people from rural areas to the urban areas. This in-turn affects our back bone i.e., agriculture. What is your view on this?

Land is the society's property; no one is

ready to share the burden of the society. I have been preaching about a concept in agriculture and I have also approached many people in the political circles. My proposal is that—just like SEZs and SIPCOT, let the government lease out some land for agriculture. The government can hold fifty one percentage of land and the remaining be with the individual.

Many of us know that your name is being associated with social causes like public sanitation and surrogate motherhood. Can you please brief us on your views?

Public Sanitation, as a health hazard is one of the most critical discrepancies faced by us in today's times. On one hand, we are technically developing each day, and on the other hand we are ignoring basic health issues. This is curbing our overall development. Why doesn't government emphasize each petrol pump to have a toilet, and why not have one in post offices, police stations, and ATM centres?

We debate a lot on surrogate motherhood; we argue on legal, ethical, religious, and psychological issues—I am not sensing any of these immoral or criminal. Surrogacy makes families and gives financial assistance to a poor person.

Lot of youth or Gen Y are occupying key positions in the corporate ladder but they end up confining themselves into the four walls. They do not know the real India. What is your message for them?

India's biggest cultural treasure is the emotional bond and warmth of relationship. They should understand our tradition and appreciate it. Family bond is far and high from all societal hurdles. They should look beyond their office cubicles. Our society needs system change. Although there is a change in the mindset of the people, the progress is very slow. Their awareness is also very low, especially amongst women. How many women know that there is an act called Domestic Violence Act?

—J. Amirtha Kannan



Healing Hands; HELPING HANDS

With innumerable people dying of terminally afflicted illness, palliative care has become imperative in the modern day context. While this could have been a necessity even earlier, a longstanding joint family system ensured that someone cared for such people albeit reluctantly in many cases.

But, in today's world where life is fast and often stressful, those with terminal illness simply don't have anyone to care for them in the last leg of their journey in this world. This is why palliative care has become such a vital bridge between people, families and the community as a whole.

In this context, The Pratham Hospice Trust was set up in 2006 as a Charitable Trust. Its objective is to establish services for the care and effective treatment of terminally ill cancer patients, and those beyond hope. It also aims to work closely with other hospices, clinics and homes for the sick to provide palliative care.

It was indeed a very momentous day when the hospice space was located and inaugurated recently at T Nagar, Chennai. Some of the most concerned and responsible citizens of Chennai were present as this facility became operational.

"We hope to establish one or more hospices for the care and palliative treatment of those who are terminally ill with cancer, HIV or any other disease which needs care," says Ranvir Shah one of key people behind Pratham Trust.

"We aim to provide this care to those who are poor, lonely, neglected, and



We hope to establish one or more hospices for the care and palliative treatment of those who are terminally ill with cancer, HIV or any other disease which needs care.



dying in pain and indignity in surroundings that will be conducive to the comfort and peace of mind of such patients, so that they can be cared for until the time of their death. Our facilities make it possible for them to live without pain and suffering, and in conditions that

would help them face the end with dignity by a focus on the prevention of pain and relief from suffering rather than life prolongation," adds Ranvir Shah.

At present the Trust is in a position to provide palliative care for such patients in their own homes. There is a fully qualified doctor on call, trained nurses, and volunteers who provide additional, periodic support to the patients by visiting him/her regularly.

At the Pratham Hospice Trust, it is believed that there is no need to die in pain, palliative care is about living and that it is ultimately not about the end of life. And, Ranvir believes that palliative care can provide an option between prolonged suffering and a better way of managing of pain and discomfort.

The Trust's services are offered to one and all, without any discrimination of caste or creed and irrespective of one's financial position. Home care is also provided, if the patients so desire.

So far, 77 terminally ill patients have been admitted in the hospice and homecare services were rendered to 53 patients until July 2012. At present, the six-bedded ward of the Hospice is functions at: 16/8, Vijayaraghava Lane, [off: Vijayaraghava Road], T Nagar, Chennai - 600 017. Ph: 9150002206 / 96770 10776 / 044 6452 5265.

—Chitra Mahesh

If you wish support Pratham, Please contact them at No. 15, Race Course Road, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032 or call 044-66848484/9940623628.

Swami Vivekananda's First Meeting With Madame Emma Calvé

Swami Vivekananda] was lecturing in Chicago one year when I was there; and as I was at that time greatly depressed in mind and body, I decided to go to him.

Before going I had been told not to speak until he addressed me. When I entered the room, I stood before him in silence for a moment. He was seated in a noble attitude of meditation, his robe of saffron yellow falling in straight lines to the floor, his head swathed in a turban bent forward, his eyes on the ground. After a pause he spoke without looking up.

"My child", he said, "what a troubled atmosphere you have about you. Be calm. It is essential".

Then in a quiet voice, untroubled and aloof, this man who did not even know my name talked to me of my secret

problems and anxieties. He spoke of things that I thought were unknown even to my nearest friends. It seemed miraculous, supernatural.

"How do you know all this?" I asked at last. "Who has talked of me to you?"

He looked at me with his quiet smile as though I were a child who had asked a foolish question.

"No one has talked to me", he answered gently. "Do you think that it is necessary? I read in you as in an open book."

Finally it was time for me to leave.

"You must forget", he said as I rose. "Become gay and happy again. Build up your health. Do not dwell in silence upon your sorrows. Transmute your emotions into some form of external expression. Your spiritual health requires it.

Your art demands it."

I left him deeply impressed by his words and his personality. He seemed to have emptied my brain of all its feverish complexities and placed there instead his clear and calming thoughts. I became once again vivacious and cheerful, thanks to the effect of his powerful will. He did not use any of the hypnotic or mesmeric influences. It was the strength of his character, the purity and intensity of his purpose that carried conviction. It seemed to me, when I came to know him better, that he lulled one's chaotic thoughts into a state of peaceful acquiescence, so that one could give complete and undivided attention to his words.

—Source: As told in Calvé's autobiography, *My Life*



Professionalism - the operational norms

The second dimension that deeply affects feeling of belongingness is 'Professionalism'. This is also a word that is most misunderstood and misinterpreted in work spaces. This is also a word that many people seem to think they know, but have articulated the least.

The word professionalism is derived from the word 'profess' which means 'to make open declaration of', 'to claim to be expert in'; Profession according to Webster's Dictionary is said to mean: Business, calling, career, employment, job, line of work, occupation, office, position, sphere, walk of life, etc and a Professional is synonymous to: adept, competent, skilled, efficient, experienced, masterly, polished, practiced, proficient, qualified, slick, trained, etc. The word profession means to have an established method of functioning where competence, agility, expertise and objectivity are valued. The major features of professionalism include the ethical standards of work, the awareness of bias and equal opportunity to all the professionals employed, transparent and fairness in dealings, and competency being valued. These outcomes lead to the person being valued and that is an important dimension of feeling of belongingness.

Professionalism is expressed in systems and processes that are followed in an organization. The transactional culture that the stakeholders experience will showcase the extent of professionalism of the organization.

In organizations run by social entrepreneurs it is a challenge to develop and sustain systems and processes that express professionalism as interpreted by the larger organizations. The reasons for the challenges is these teams are usually neither too large nor too small; there would be people who associate with the team in full time, or part time, or voluntary, or advisory basis. These would lead to varied kinds of relationship in terms of time, energy, responsibility, accountability, etc. and there would be lean support staff making most of the people play multiple roles with varied levels of accountability. The structure is usually hazy and driven by the need of the project. On top of all these the social



entrepreneurs are usually driven by the passion and the purpose of the project and may not have the necessary skill and focus in administration. This relegates formulation and development of systems and processes in functioning into a secondary activity. This reduces the organization into people driven spaces rather than process driven spaces.

It is important that we remain mindfully essence centered while understanding and interpreting the systems and processes in non-profit or social enterprise

organizations. The purpose is larger and everything needs to be centered on the achievement of that purpose. Relationship and staying connected become important factors to build feeling of belongingness. 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going'. Social entrepreneurship is a tough venture and it gets people who are tough. This toughness needs a strong bonding within the team. The way team's level of trust, honesty with each other, acceptance of each other and the situations that arise, openness to give and receive feedback, highest level of integrity in functioning, ability to respond to dynamic situations, support each other with convictions, agree to disagree, mutual respect and love in transactions, commitment towards self and others, credibility in thought and action, ability to go beyond hierarchy and function with appropriateness—becomes the factors that comprise professionalism.

For people who would have worked in large impersonal multinational organizational cultures, understanding and integrating the social entrepreneurship professional culture is itself a huge challenge. They tend to get caught in terming the culture as an informal culture. This makes the transition or change difficult and it creates a number of human issues within the organization. We have forgotten how the Indian civilization for the last thousands of years before invasions had shown high level of functioning based on *dharma*, *neeti* and *nyayas*. There were treatises available on the way an organization can function. Globally the movement has been towards one that is closer to being a human rather than façade and masking.

Generally the most popular systems and processes are imported. But a true social entrepreneurship organization needs to spend time to deeply articulate its vision, values (beliefs) that will guide the team and then formulate systems and processes that will enable the team towards high performance. The feeling of belongingness emerges when the team is able to stay committed and have love and acceptance as the foundation.

A Series on 'Belongingness... nurturing people connect.'

The key actions:

- To identify, understand and articulate the context within which the vision is set
- Formulate the beliefs and values which will guide the team in formulating its functioning systems and process
- A continuous conscious keeping activity that will enable the integration of these beliefs into the culture of the organization
- A good amount of time being spent to articulate and arrive at the systemic changes and process checks within the functioning of the system
- A good amount of time being spent on building and integrating the team to trust and accept each other

Reflections:

1. What are the systems that are required that will enable my team towards high performance?
2. What are the values and beliefs that team agrees to nurture to work together?
3. What activities do we regularly follow that nurtures integrity, trust, acceptance, and love within the team?
4. What are the levels of commitment that are nurtured by the team within and the world outside?
5. What are the evaluation mechanisms that indicate the level of professionalism within my organization?

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath, PhD

Help in a heartbeat



"When we were pondering what would be the best way to attract the interests of doctors towards public health, we chanced upon the idea of celebrating Doctors' Day, as a means to felicitate those who are already doing yeomen service to the community and also to build a strong network of committed individuals."

In the midst of a busy work-day routine, a silent brigade of volunteers continue to get together to bring some betterment in the lives of those who are not as fortunate as they are. This spirit of volunteerism glows bright and the numbers keep multiplying, adding strength to the common interests held by each. It is common knowledge that efforts when multiplied reap exponentially large returns. That is roughly how Udhavum Ullangal operates. Here is an excerpt of a conversation with Shankar Mahadevan, Founder Trustee.

"In 1998, we started this concept of 'Ananda-Deepawali'. Since not everybody can afford to celebrate important festivals like Deepawali with the same pomp and show as others, we thought of initiating mass celebrations. In our first attempt, we brought 300 children together. Subsequently, this concept has caught on like a rapid-fire and our numbers have become as large as 1500 each year," says Shankar Mahadevan.

From then on, this group of volunteers met every Sunday and started helping out at orphanages and homes. Support for education was one of the main services provided. A mentorship system was introduced wherein every volunteer would be attached to a handful of children and a detailed compilation of information on every child was carried out. Over 500 such children are kept in the records.

Udhavum Ullangal works along with the National Child Labour Project and has so far successfully brought back over 200 children to their formal schools both in and around Chennai as well as Sivakasi. "We

strive to support any number of genuine cases," state Shankar Mahadevan.

In the area of Healthcare, multiple projects have been undertaken. "When we were pondering what would be the best way to attract the interests of doctors towards public health, we chanced upon the idea of celebrating Doctors' Day, as a means to felicitate those who are already doing yeomen service to the community and also to build a strong network of committed individuals," says Shankar Mahadevan.

Since 2004, Udhavum Ullangal has been giving away Sanjeevi Awards to doctors for their extended work in communities all over the state. Furthermore, young doctors are brought together for continued medical education. In 2009, 120 doctors had attended this program in Courtallam; in 2010, the same was organized in Tuticorin; and in 2011, a Cancer Prevention Center was inaugurated by Dr. Shantha of Cancer Institute of Chennai. This center, manned by four social investigators and medical officers is engaged in screening, awareness and education of people about prevention and cures of different types of cancers.

Melapalayam district, where there is a predominance of Beedi Rollers' belonging to the Muslim community, Udhavum Ullangal places a special focus

on cancer education. A 100-bed-hospital has been proposed at Thirunelveli for which Dr. Shantha and famed oncologist Dr. Krishnakumar are on the advisory board.

Apart from this, 150 families ridden with leprosy and blindness are being provided with monthly rations worth Rs. 400 each for the last four years.

Udhavum Ullangal also works in the area of livelihoods. A skill development center, each at Nanmangalam (Medavakkam) and Hastinapuram (Chromepet), offer training programs for interested persons in computer education, tailoring, and beautician training. These centers run in association with Accenture Technologies Pvt. Ltd. These

training programs are offered free of cost and the desired objective is to generate incomes.

Given the free-ranging nature of volunteerism, it is surprising to note how well coordinated the whole exercise is. The proof of great team work is evident from all the projects mentioned above which have so far withstood the test of time.

When asked to tell us about some of the pillars behind the success story of Udhavum Ullangal, Shankar

Mahadevan mentions with enthusiasm about his colleagues.

Having taken voluntary retirement from the Indian Bank after 35 years of service, Shankar Mahadevan is one of the founders of Udhavum Ullangal. The other trustees are: Mr. Santhanam, a Public Works Dept. officer; Mr. S.V.G. Subramaniam who works with the Shankar Nethralaya Eye Bank; Mrs. Premalatha of the Madras Voluntary Blood Bureau; and Mr. Ramesh Kumar, Director at Innova Eye Solutions. "In fact, it is the contacts and professional network of Mr. Ramesh Kumar that helped us frame our HR policy and source enough funding for our organization," expresses Shankar Mahadevan gratefully, highlighting the contributions of his colleagues towards the success of the organization. Reflecting on the journey so far, Shankar Mahadevan opines that steady volunteerism is absent these days. Yet, he has firm belief in the transformation that a handful of committed volunteers can bring to society. Tucked away in a quiet corner of bustling T.Nagar is an office of Udhavum Ullangal, where a social worker and a part time resource person handle the day-to-day affairs. Without them and the scores of volunteers who spend their weekends working for the underprivileged, our society would be a little more wanting than what it is today.

—Archanaa R.

If you wish to contact Udhavum Ullangal, please call Sankar Mahadevan at 9444194743 or write to uu1sankar@yahoo.com



“I consider a posting to be a role assigned to me by God in his Big Scheme of Things.”

Shri S K Dogra IPS shares with Marie Banu his role as a police officer.

Shri S K Dogra IPS was born on 14th December, 1953 at Dhariwal, a small town in Punjab. He did his Master's degree in English Literature and Linguistics from Baring Union Christian College, Batala, and then taught English Literature and Linguistics for over 5 years in the English Department of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

He joined Indian Police Service in 1982 and was allotted to Tamil Nadu cadre. He has served in different capacities in various parts of Tamil Nadu and is now the Additional Director General of Police in charge of the Prison Department. He takes interest in music and painting and is on the editorial board of Crisis Response Journal published from London. He also maintains a website dogratamil.com

In an exclusive interview, Shri S K Dogra IPS shares with Marie Banu his role as a police officer.

You had held several portfolios in Indian Police Service. Is there any role that you cherish most?

My thinking is greatly influenced by the *karmayoga* philosophy of Srimad Bhagwad Geeta. I consider a posting to be a role assigned to me by God in his Big Scheme of Things. The *karmayoga* orientation prevents the 'good-posting; bad-posting' syndrome and helps me enjoy my work. Every posting offers new challenges and new opportunities to serve people. It gives you a glimpse of the society from an angle you had missed so far.

Karmayoga teaches you to focus on the task and enjoy the act of performing it rather than wait for results. It makes you one with the task. You tend to lose your personal identity and become the role you are performing. For a follower of the *karmayoga* philosophy, the task is more significant than who performs it or who gets the credit. Once you learn to put your trust in Him and His Design, you begin to accept that every role He assigns to you as well as its timing is a part of a well thought-out decision. Steve Jobs called it 'connecting the dots'.

At present, as the officer in charge of the prisons in Tamil Nadu, I am working on some projects with tremendous potential. During the past six months or so, I have used meditation techniques in Puzhal prison to change the psychology of the prison-inmates. In the next couple of months, I hope to build up this entire edifice into a huge structure.

Srimad Bhagwad Geeta and Maharishi Patanjali's Yog Sutras are two of our ancient scriptures that have deeply influenced my life. One taught me *Karmayoga* and the other



Samadhi. These have become the two pillars on which I have built up my thinking, my life and my career.

Was this a reason you have emphasized on meditation, spirituality, and yoga in Puzhal prison?

Strictly speaking, meditation is not a part of any religion. The processes described in Yog Sutras are more easily understood in terms of neural activity of the brain and the spinal cord rather than in terms of any specific religion.

To my knowledge the only reference in Yog Sutras that could be called 'religious' is in the Sutra where the Maharishi says '*tasya vaachakaah pranavah*', meaning 'His name is Om' and '*tajapas tadartha bhaavanam*', meaning during meditation the word Om should be pronounced and we should concentrate on its meaning. The word '*Om*' simulates the pulsating transmission of energy. The repetition of the '*Om*' sound, whether pronounced loudly or silently in the mind, puts the chakras into vibration and converts them into transmission systems in touch with the universe, its energy, and God.

I am not sure whether this process should be called religious or scientific.

Incidentally, what I teach to the prison-inmates has nothing to do with all of this. I use a simple psychological technique that I learnt from my friend Dr. Rishi Tewari who runs a stress management centre in Egmore, Chennai. In this technique I take the prison-inmates to a deep level of concentration and then make them replace their negative thought processes with positive ones. Along with this, I use a number of feedback techniques. I have named the entire system 'Reverse Socialisation' and plan to build it as a model of reformation for other jails. I keep noting down my observations with a view to bring it out as a book.

When I asked one of the prison-inmates

how my meditation techniques were affecting him, he said: "I feel something I had never felt before. Whenever I do something, someone in my mind seems to watch and assess it as good or bad." I thought this was a great success for my effort. The prison-inmate had begun to develop a conscience, or what Freud would call the Super Ego.

The Tamil Nadu government recently sanctioned 45 lakh rupees for a bakery unit in Puzhal prison. Can you please tell us more about this?

The bakery is a part of a bigger concept called Prison Bazar. Honourable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu wishes that reformation of prison-inmates should be combined with their rehabilitation as professionals. Prison Bazar will help us provide opportunities to the prison-inmates to learn trades and earn money while serving their sentence.

What are the challenges that the prison-inmates face after being released from jail? What are the steps taken by the government to support them?

At present, a prison-inmate leaves a prison with the blot of being an ex-convict. I wish that our efforts turn the tide and a released prison-inmate is seen as a person recently returned from a kind of academy after a period of training and self-improvement.

A large part of my effort is focused on filling the mind of the prison-inmates with the idea that they are living in an *ashram*. In our society, an *ashram* has certain connotations—spirituality, piety of heart and habits, non-smoking, non-drinking, cleanliness of mind and body, etc. So, when this word '*ashram*' is planted deep in the mind of a prison-inmate, it begins to play its role and changes the thinking as well as the behaviour of the person.

Fortunately, the Prison Bazar is likely to come at a time when I would have prepared the prison-inmates mentally for devoting themselves to work. It will be my effort to build the Prison Bazar around the idea of 'labour as a process of self-purification' rather than 'labour as a way of earning money'.

Can you tell us about the marketing linkages for the products that are produced in the prison?

So far, we have been producing only for the government departments. It is a system where the production is driven by the order rather than a product seeking a market. Prison Bazaar will reverse the process. Under the Prison Bazaar, we will be working in a competitive market situation where quality, efficiency, and uniqueness of product will decide success.

Honourable Chief Minister's concept of Prison Bazaar creates the unique opportunity of utilising the labour-potential of the prison-inmates in a manner that provides a win-win situation for everyone. Now, it is for us in the Prison Department to translate it into a buzzing reality. Essentially, what I am doing these days through the meditation sessions in Puzhal, is to prepare the ground for a roaring success of the Prison Bazaar and to translate Honourable Chief Minister's vision into reality.

Given the recent Assam communal riots and numerous honor killing cases, what are your thoughts on the value systems of the people in our country today?

We are living in a society that is changing each day. The value-system that sustained us through the centuries is crumbling under waves from the West. Traditional society had strong systems of control. Now, control is believed to hinder creativity. The media and films encourage the youth to rebel against anything and everything.

Everyone has his or her view on what the future culture should be like. I am the traditional type. I believe that a few fundamental features of our culture should not be allowed to fritter away. For me, the institution of family is very important. Similarly, we must teach our children to look at things from the point of view of others.

Much of today's violence takes place because we don't cultivate in our youngsters the quality of empathy. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." How many of us follow this? We believe what pains us doesn't pain the others.

A mob that can set someone on fire and watch without feeling the pain has moved as far away from humanity as the distance between heaven and hell. Every time such incidents occur one is constrained to wonder whether something has gone fundamentally wrong with our society.

Editorial
Latha Suresh
Marie Banu