

Conversations

A Chronicle of Social Currents

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About lives of Poo Idayar community people

Photo: Marie Banu

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"The first thing that the senior citizens want is to be part of a community."

An exclusive interview with
Shri. R. V. Shekar,
Managing Director,
Lancor Holdings Limited

From the Editor

Dear Friend,

Greetings!
Pongal is a celebration of prosperity, especially for the farming community. During the celebrations farmers express their gratitude to the

Sun God who is also known as 'Surya Deva'. Arunan, the Charioteer of Surya Deva was disabled. Therefore it is learnt, that Surya Deva always blesses and helps those who are disabled.

As we step into a new year, let us

thank the sun, plants, and all the changemakers who are featured in this issue for their yeomen service to our society.

Wish you a Very Happy Pongal!

P. N. Subramanian



to learn • to heal • to raise
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TRAFFIC AND PRECAUTIONS - A NEW YEAR PLEDGE

In everyday life, we hear about accidents and incidents of several kind—road accidents, murder for gain, burglary, chain snatching, eve teasing, fire accidents, industrial accidents, frauds, cheating of several kinds, etc. This causes great concern to safety for each one of us. Accidents and other security incidents affect several families and undergo lifelong sufferings.

We understand that about 35 people lose their lives and more than 100 people get injured due to road accidents. Passengers get killed while traveling on foot-board in trains and buses. People get involved in electrical accidents due to malfunctioning of electrical appliances, explosion, and fire due to cooking gas leak. Accidents happen while talking on mobile phone while walking and crossing the railway track or road.

Several Motorists are involved in fatal accidents due to violation of rules; not wearing helmets/seat belts; talking on mobile phone while driving; ignoring traffic signals; etc. Many road users and passengers are unable to walk on the pedestrian platform and cross the road due to lack of consideration by the motorists.

Due to these issues, many families lose their breadwinners. I suggest that all of us should be aware that accidents are waiting to happen. We should expect the unexpected to happen in our everyday walk of life, and be prepared to handle it effectively.



In order to create awareness amongst the citizens on the importance of safety issue, I request everyone to follow rules and safety practices.

Let us all resolve as a new year pledge to follow rules and take safety precautions in our day to day life in the interest of our safety and safety of our nation!

—Rtn. R. Narasimhan
District Chairman, Public Safety
District 3230, Chennai

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, CHENNAI
FOR THE MONTH OF
NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2012

Loss of lives due
to accidents

256

No. of accidents
reported

1,609

NUMBER OF CASES BOOKED FOR
TRAFFIC VIOLATION: 397,391

- Signal violation - 34,339
- Wrong side driving - Nil
- Over speeding - 9,716
- Violation of one way rule - 27,427

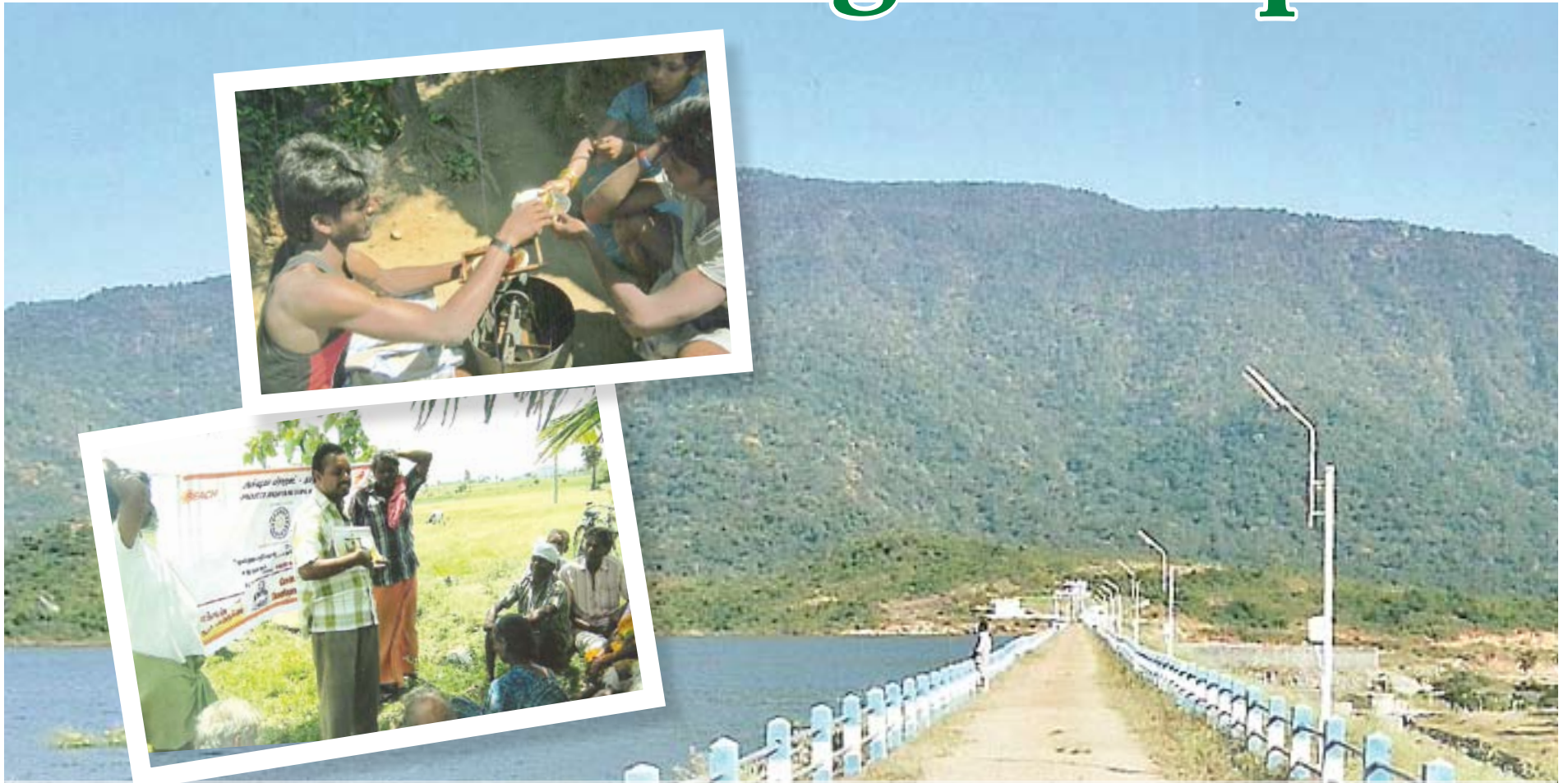
ADD SPARKLE TO THE SEASON WITH A
TOUCH OF THE ORIENT AT **China Town**
A SIP OF SCINTILLATING SPAIN AT **Zara**
A TINGE OF EXOTIC THAILAND AT **Benjarong**
A MESMERISING SENSE OF NORTH INDIA
AT **COPPER CHIMNEY** A SPLASH OF COASTAL FRESHNESS
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On the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



Spanning a width of 80 kilometers and a length of 32 kilometers, and covering major portions of three districts of the state of Tamil Nadu are the mighty Javvadhu Hills. Pristine and blessed with nature's bounty, these hills are a source of rich vegetation and forestry. This region is home to one of the oldest tribal communities—the Malai Gounder or Malayaali tribe. This is a community that lives by the customs and traditions that are centuries old. Working with this community and those around the Javvadhu hills is Senthil Kumar, a young entrepreneur cum social worker.

Senthil Kumar, along with five of his friends established Kalaimagal Rural People's Educational Development Trust (KRPED) in 1999, when he was barely 21 years old. This trust aimed to provide educational support for the children living in Chengam at Thiruvannamalai District. Soon after the trust started its operations, the trustees decided to expand its horizons and work with the tribal communities as well.

"With the commission of the Kuppanatham Dam, about a thousand acres of land were taken away from the local people after giving them very little compensation. We decided that it was time for us to work with the hillside communities and so started a youth club and a women's association. Through these, we facilitated the issuing of community certificates and other identity cards to enable these communities avail government facilities. We also set up a day-care centre for the elderly at Oorgavundanur Taluk, in response to the increasing abandonment of the elderly in the hills. After a two-year struggle, we enabled issue of 340 community certificates to the people here. This is a big success for us," explains an enthusiastic Senthil.

It was in 2009 that Senthil and his friends came to know about CSIM. Senthil joined the Certificate programme in Social Entrepreneurship at CSIM and travelled the arduous six hour journey every weekend

to attend classes. "Until I had joined CSIM, work would appear to be going on, but it was largely in a swirl. After joining CSIM, we were able to provide a better structure for our activities. Those were indeed a highly useful four months," says Senthil.

Soon thereafter, KRPED's activities became concentrated on three main thematic areas—Health, Agriculture and Education. On the health front, Senthil says, the KRPED works on the eradication of tuberculosis, and to provide greater and free access to general health care to the people of Chengam.

KRPED started the Mahatma Gandhi Uzhavar mandram (farmers' association) to promote organic farming. Through this forum, drip irrigation set ups were purchased that were worth Rs. 42,000, and in 2013, shortly after Pongal festival, an exposure visit was planned for the farmers.

On the education front, awareness programs on Right to Education Act, various adult literacy programs, and evening schools have been started.

One of the most significant contributions of Senthil and his team at KRPED has been the introduction of income-generation programs (IGPs) for the tribal communities. After three years of laborious discussions and study of the local markets, KRPED has introduced tamarind plucking and honey-extraction as IGPs to select groups of women. Senthil, who himself is a trained honey-collector works closely with the forest authorities and local people to achieve parity in income-generation programs. He says: "Ms. Beulah, a well-respected professional in Chennai encouraged and sponsored my training in honey-extraction." Having already seen success in this endeavour through putting up stalls and catering to some local clients, this business is now gearing up for honey export to countries like Sri Lanka, where the demand for high medicinal value of honey (especially that of the rich Javvadhu Hills) is already at a pinnacle.

Conducting his business of bleaching powder distributorship by day and working with the hillside tribal people at night, Senthil juggles a very hectic routine. Certainly it would require a tremendous amount of support from family. Senthil answers in the affirmative, "It was my father, a retired government servant himself, who advised me to start this Trust. Today I have a son who is studying in the ninth standard and this Trust has become my life's mission."

In another strain he says, "Even my business serves as a kind of social awareness and it helps me to maintain great relationships with the Panchayat Presidents of different Panchayats in this region."

The KRPED office has five full time staff and five volunteers. The day care centre for the elderly engages the elders in some form of work to keep them out of boredom. The Trust ensures that the government hears out and answers their requests from time to time. It is not easy to be working in the hills among people whose practices are outdated, with no transport facilities, no electricity supply, and sometimes, no food either.

We ask Senthil what are his plans for the future and he says, "We are planning to garner more financial support for the elderly day care center; start more evening schools and promote honey-marketing in Chennai. We are evolving as the communities around us evolve. Communities are dynamic and we would be doing them a disservice if we stuck to a specific agenda. It is by example that we can liberate these communities from the shackles of their resistance to change."

Plenty of fascinating stories, nostalgic recollections, and resolute plans later, we draw this conversation to a close. Senthil marches on, pushing himself further and further in his uphill tasks, only to prove to himself and others yet again that where there is a will, there sure is a way.

—Archanaa. R

The Beginning, the Progress, and the Success!

We have known childhood friends who cherish memories of having total fun playing in their backyards, cycling or fishing together, studying together, etc. But here, we have the story of two childhood friends who have steadily moulded their foray into the social development sector. “Suyam Charitable Trust, established in 1999, is the outcome of all the simple and yet constructive steps that allowed us to reach the people,” says Mr. Muthuram, Trustee.

Mr. Muthuram and Dr. V. Uma (Founder & Managing Trustee) have taken part in numerous activities at such a young age that what followed later was only a natural outcome of it. “When we were 10 years old, we were bothered about the incomplete nature of slum children’s education. The fact that they did not make it like other children was disturbing. So we decided to educate them in our terraces,” shares Muthuram.

He confirms that age does bring in maturity, whether one acknowledges it or not. Muthuram and Uma began to explore other activities like medical camps. Soon, volunteering for temple work (managing crowds) came up and the duo’s interaction with like minded individuals grew bigger and stronger. Uma formed the Vishal Rangers Team to manage the task at Ranganathan temples in Tirupati and Chennai. Organisation of organ and body donation camps was next in line.

Sometimes it takes one specific event to convincingly push one towards their passion. ‘*Vizhigal kattum vazhigal*’ was one such event in 1993. “An eye exhibition that caught the attention of more than 180 people introduced us to the concept of reach,” says Muthuram, recollecting that 22 cataract surgeries were performed then.

With more and more activities shaping their skills and potentials, friends and well wishers suggested that they give a concrete shape to their work in the form of an organisation. Thus was born ‘Suyam Charitable Trust’ in 1999, with notable public support. Now comes the most interesting part – the monetary support. Interestingly, the duo came up with the idea of collecting 10 rupees from each friend. This was called the ‘Anamika initiative’. It helped them create a corpus of 5,000 rupees to establish the Trust and the remaining 40,000 rupees was utilised to purchase a land near Periyapalayam.

“Sometimes the message is very simple

and pressing – the moment you decide to do good things, the required support flows in,” he smiles.

Uma’s interest in personality development programmes helped her choose Social Work as her career option. With both sharing an MS in Education Management, it was obvious that their interest in education was taken forward. Led by Uma, they organised 30 personality development camps for Corporation school students and children’s homes in Tamil Nadu.

“In one of the schools, the scoring percentage of students improved from 57 to 87. We were excited to see the impact,” exclaims Muthuram, who firmly believed that this transformation was a result of simplified methods of teaching and learning. He thinks it is very important to strike a chord at the right time. “Post 10th grade our students have a constant dilemma on their choice of career. Only timely guidance can be of help,” he confirms.

As he explains, he is more heartened by the change initiated by their team of volunteers. A school girl decided to commit suicide on being threatened by a boy from the community. “On being counselled by a Suyam volunteer, she was able to overcome the trauma. Incidents like these reiterate that we are on the right path. Certainly, age is no barrier to inspire or get inspired,” he asserts.

“Considering their record of reach and consistency. Siragu was awarded the second place in the Akzo Nobel Community Program Best Practices Competition in 2007.”

The reach of the programmes was visible in the camps organised for the students. At least 200 students would enrol for the camps at Suyam. The school teachers also made it a point to be a part of these camps. In all, it was an enriching experience to all the members.

“A one day seminar conducted for the students of Hindu College at Pattabiram further added value to my experience. Whether one is in school or college is immaterial. What truly matters is an individual’s level of excellence and the inculcation of right values at the right

age”. Educational needs of adult and children, medical assistance programme including post operative support were the regular work undertaken by Suyam. Additionally, the organisation manages to do its part in other realms, when found a chance. Suyam volunteers had planted 1,000 pits and saplings at Tambaram Sanatorium Hospital in Chennai.

After about a year into its operation, the girls’ team at Suyam underwent a course in videography. The need to submit a documentary at the end of this course saw them exploring the possibility of filming the lives of families living near the water pipes at Kilpauk in Chennai. As always, the attempt had to win the assent of the people as they were wary about being used as objects of shame by many. Their frustration and helplessness was understood. The team led by Uma promised to act on their plight and convinced them on the need to film their lives. The movie titled ‘*Nadaipathai pookkal*’ (meaning ‘pavement flowers’) came out with a strong message that education is the only key to transform their lives.

But how did they get into begging? Suyam organised numerous workshops and programmes to change their attitude towards begging. Serving food from a star hotel to these people broke the ice. The community was convinced that Suyam was here for their good and promised to



cooperate. Suyam requested every family to send at least two of their children to schools. The number grew unimaginably faster. 2 became 20 in no time.

Next was the resource barrier. Surprisingly, the community came forward to help Suyam. They wanted Suyam to run a school for their children in their land near Avadi. In addition, an old couple in the region came forward to lease their house to them. With supplementary funds from different sources, Siragu Montessori School was established in June 2003.

"The Governor of Tamil Nadu who came for the inauguration was totally inspired by our work. But the school did not last for long. The building was set on fire in 2004 by some miscreants. With the help of volunteers and supporters, we erected another school within two days, but were again forced to vacate. It was then Suyam decided to create an asset. The sale of 10 rupees bookmarks brought in 1.2 lakh rupees. This along with a loan of 2.5 lakh rupees enabled us to purchase a land in 2005. With limited resources, we opted to build a small temporary structure using hollow blocks for construction. Soon, the tide was turning in our favour. We repaid the loan in 2009 and constructed nine permanent class rooms with the support of Madras Knights Round Table 181," narrates Muthuram with pride.



Accolades to Suyam are not a surprise, considering their record of reach and consistency. Siragu was awarded the second place in the Akzo Nobel Community Program Best Practices Competition in 2007. Across a selection of 2,500 volunteers, 500 projects from 45 countries, Suyam Charitable Trust was awarded for the facilities they provided through Siragu Montessori School. The

money that came along with the award—50,000 euros—was invested in the project.

The results from Siragu were more than convincing. The students excelled at Olympiad and some have also made it to FIIT-JEE coaching. With the strength of 550 children, Siragu has branched out with two more schools – one in Chennai and the other in its outskirts. Siragu

envisages developing the schools to higher secondary level, with residential facilities for both teachers and children.

Was this all? No. The horizons of Suyam's work kept expanding with time. The team came across 43 families from a nomadic tribe 2 years ago. With no criminal records on them, their exploitation by the local *goondas* was a cause of worry. Suyam intervened and protested to bring an end to this menace. The Government finally allotted a piece of land for these families near Morai.

Today, the children from these families are educated at Siragu, with buses plying specially for them. 15 families were given auto rickshaws and women were offered a loan amounting to a total of 24 lakh rupees from the government to aid their vocation. They are trained to make paper products ranging from pen stand to tables and chairs. The team is now all set to create a record for making 101 paper tables, using one tonne waste paper. The photo frames made by these women are purchased by Suyam itself and the resources are pooled in to provide basic amenities to these families.

In short, Suyam lives by the principle of inclusive development and has demonstrated its effectiveness. Let's wish them success in all their efforts to grow and replicate.

—Shanmuga Priya.T.

Give A Little Of The Little You Have

Life is all about happiness—which is the gift of life. In order to reach happiness, one has to practice and enjoy certain simple activities in life.

The foremost is to be happy with yourself. Happiness is the choice you begin to exercise as an attitude and habit, which is infectious. If you cannot be happy with yourself first, you cannot be happy with others. In order to be happy, one has to practice unconditional love and boundaryless compassion.

The starting step is 'giving'; kindness in giving; acts of kindness in giving; constant with random acts of kindness in giving; in giving materials and services.

The simplest and infectious 'giving' is the smile, good and positively reinforcing words of friendship, kinship and comradeship.

Giving expands into the real meaning of trust and mutual confidence.

This goes on to 'giving' a little of your little. A little of your little is the mantra-elixir of life. Giving is endless, boundary less, limitless and full of life. The significance of little is that 'giving little' can start right away now and

here. You don't have to feel impoverished when you are giving a little of the little you have, it won't upset the apple cart, but will set a practice in motion in perpetuity. 'Give a little of your little' starts from childhood to old age and pervades as a habit or life style. This practice becomes a joy forever.

The Giving itself propels our economy, surplus creation, wealth creation.

The form key expression and its full impact on happiness is to give little of your little, give unconditionally. Giving is the underlying foundation of a positive growing and sustainable economy. Everywhere you might see is 'giving'.

Forgiving has extraordinary healing power, abundance in understanding. Peace of mind is achieved by practice of forgiving. By forgiving one gets stronger and not weak. Forgiving makes lot of long lasting friendship.

When you give and forgive, both are being 'giving'. You are left with abundance of courage, conviction and happiness or a compassion which is the capital of happiness.

—P. N. Devarajan



Bulls and Music

Poo Idayar community is commonly known as 'boom boom mattukaran' or Perumal Mattukkarar in Tamil. People belonging to this community lead a nomadic lifestyle and move from one place to another along with their caparisoned (decorated) bull. They worship Lord Venkateshwara of Tirupati and originally hail from Andhra Pradesh. It is learnt that they that were earlier flower gatherers and sold flowers for their livelihood.



“We do not steal, nor tell lies. Therefore, we visit homes with our bulls to earn our living.”



Photos: Marie Banu

“The caparison for the bullock costs Rs. 5,000 and I recently bought a calf for Rs. 20,000. Although I earn around Rs. 200 a day, I end up spending Rs. 100 to feed the cattle.”



Chellammal, 37, was sitting outside her dilapidated hut at Kasimedu Kuppam in Ennore, Chennai. Her home was amidst the ten huts that were set up in a haphazard manner in the one-ground open plot. There were three similar habitations in the locality and each had a different story to tell.

I walked towards Chellammal along with 10 to 15 curious children who followed me. Most of them wore colourful clothes, but appeared shabby. They urged me to click their pictures and pulled my camera to view them on the camera display.

As I stood there, aware of the people around me, I suddenly felt suffocated.

“Is she a foreigner? If she takes your picture, ask for money,” said one of the men to Chellammal.

Latha, our NGO contact, eased my interview process by introducing me to the men and women who were gathered around us.

Chellammal was spontaneous and welcomed me to her tent. We seated ourselves in the small cement patch in front of her home and began conversing as if we knew each other for a very long time.

“What do you want me to say?” she asked.

“Just tell me about yourself, your family, your bullock,” I replied prompting a smile.

“I have three children—two daughters and two sons. My son has studied up to tenth standard, and my daughter stopped schooling after eighth standard as she got married. My younger son and daughter are studying in the nearby school. I also have a three-month-old granddaughter, and we all live together,” said Chellammal.

Chellammal hails from Periyapalayam, a town situated about 40 km north of Chennai, in Tiruvallur district. She belongs to the Poo Idayar community, commonly known as ‘boom boom mattukaran’ or ‘Perumal Mattukkarar’ in Tamil.

People belonging to this community lead a nomadic lifestyle and move from one place to another along with their caparisoned (decorated) bull. They worship Lord Venkateshwara of Tirupati and originally hail from Andhra Pradesh. It is learnt that they were earlier flower gatherers and sold flowers for their livelihood.

“I also own two bullocks. While one bull is two years old, the other is a calf,” she said.

Chellammal leaves her home at 5 AM along with her bullock and visits homes and market places at Thiruvottiyur which is located 8 kilometers from Ennore. At times, we even start at 3 AM when we plan to visit farther places.

“We do not steal, nor tell lies.

Therefore, we visit homes with our bulls to earn our living. We convey messages like ‘you will live well; your children will do well’; ‘good things will happen in your home’. As we speak, we make our bull shake its head and kneel before each home. This is considered auspicious and each family gives us around 10 rupees, rice, and old clothes,” she said.

“The caparison for the bullock costs Rs. 5,000 and I recently bought a calf for Rs. 20,000. Although I earn around Rs. 200 a day, I end up spending Rs. 100 to feed the cattle. The earnings are not enough to meet my family’s day to day needs. I have an outstanding loan of Rs. 50,000 that I borrowed from a private money lender at a high rate of interest. My husband Mariappan has been visiting homes in the city for the past one week along with his bullock and I engage in fish vending too,” added Chellammal heaving a sigh.

The community members earn their living by performing in front of homes, public places, and

during festivals. The bull is trained to shake its head whenever a question is posed to it. If the bull shakes its head up and down it denotes ‘yes’; and if it shakes sideways, then the answer is presumed to be ‘no.’

They have a special percussion instrument—Urumi—which is beaten by hand on one side, and is simultaneously rubbed forcefully with a curved bamboo on the other. The term ‘boom boom’ refers to the sound made by the drum or Urumi. They also use a wind instrument to play songs.

As I looked around to get a glimpse of her bullocks, she signaled her son Muthu to bring them from the cattle shed.

Muthu spontaneously asked if I wanted him to decorate the bullock and hinted that I would have to pay him money for doing this.

“Will it be a bother for you?” I asked politely.

“No problem at all,” he replied.

Within five minutes, he brought the bullock decked up in bells, colorful ornaments, and clothes. He even played the wind instrument and entertained us.



As I set to click pictures, the excited children crowded closer around me. Their body odour was unpleasant though, and I tried hard not to express my discomfort.

I returned to Chellammal and we continue to chatter.

“It takes around three to six months to train a bullock. Some even take longer to get trained,” she said.

“Can you manage the bullock alone?” I asked.

“It is like managing our own children. The bullock is no different,” she replied instantly.

After clicking pictures of the children again, Chellammal led me to the other settlements in the neighbourhood. There were mostly men who were lounging in their tents and appeared to be drunk.

As the evening drew to a close, I bid adieu to this colorful community. The children followed me up to the end of the road and kept waving until the car was out of sight.

—Marie Banu

Narayana Hrudayalaya: From the Heart

Balancing social impact and a strategy to execute on a sustainable business model lies at the core of Dr Devi Prasad Shetty's plan of growing Narayana Hrudayalaya.

Fifteen years ago, Dr. Devi Prasad Shetty realised that a good part of India's progress lay in improving the standard of healthcare available to the common man. And along the way, he also realised that charity alone could not help the situation. "If I wanted to build a large chain of hospitals across the country, I needed to build a successful company which aimed to bring down the cost and make it affordable and thereby, also be attractive for banks to lend to and investors to invest in," says Shetty. With that intention, he created Narayana Hrudayalaya Health City in Bengaluru in 2001.

Today, the Bengaluru-based hospital chain runs 14 hospitals in 11 cities and is in the process of adding another six hospitals. From specialty centres to multi-specialty hospitals, the chain caters to every healthcare need and aims to make healthcare affordable, while meeting international quality standards.

Prior to creating Narayana Hrudayalaya, Shetty founded the Asia Heart Foundation in Kolkata in 1997 to create awareness on heart diseases and help unfortunate children suffering from the same. It was this experience that gave Shetty much needed clarity, in terms of his vision for a hospital.

Growing specialties

While the initial investment for the hospital chain came from family, in 2008, global investment banks J.P. Morgan and American

While Shetty has been recognised for his efforts and honoured by the Government of India with the Padma Bhushan this year, he still believes that Indian healthcare has a long way to go.

International Group invested Rs. 200 crore each in the company. At present, the company is seeking funding for specific projects, preferably from local partners. The group is headed by Dr. Raghuvanshi, CEO and also a cardiac surgeon, a group COO, Dr. Lloyd Nazareth, who has vast experience in managing hospitals, and a CFO, Sreenath, in addition to a professional team to manage the growth.

If I wanted to build a large chain of hospitals across the country, I needed to build a successful company which aimed to bring down the cost and make it affordable and thereby, also be attractive for banks to lend to and investors to invest in.

Apart from NH Multispecialty Hospital, NH Devaraj Urs Hospital, NH Hospital, Narayana Cayman University Medical Center, SDM NH, and RTIICS (Rabindranath Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences) NH, the chain also runs Mazumdar Shaw Cancer Centre, one of the world's largest cancer hospitals with 1,400 beds, in association with Kiran Mazumdar Shaw of Biocon. It also has dental clinics and diagnostic centres, and the range of services include academic research, tele-medicine, corporate health services, international medicine and stem cell research apart from healthcare, with a special focus on cardiac, oncology, medicine, surgical (general and specialised) and diagnostics.

While Shetty has been recognised for his efforts and honoured by the Government of India with the Padma Bhushan this year, he still believes that Indian healthcare has a long way to go. Primarily, he feels that policy changes should be introduced at the national level to provide health insurance for the underprivileged and amongst his many plans is to enrol 2,000

children from rural India in medical colleges every year. "We started one such effort on a small scale in West Bengal six years ago, under a programme called Udayar Pathay, wherein rural children in class seven who are passionate about becoming doctors are given a scholarship of Rs. 500 per month," he explains. These children aspire to study medicine and Narayana Hrudayalaya mentors them to join medical colleges on merit. It also supports the students by organising a student loan for their studies and helps them with their other requirements, if necessary.

Meeting the challenges

According to Shetty, the growth of healthcare institutions will be stalled not because of the money but by lack of skilled manpower. Shortage of healthcare manpower in India has impacted the cost of human resources, which is increasing. And hence, every institution of Narayana Hrudayalaya's double up as an academic institution conducting training programmes for a range of medical professionals from cardiac surgeons to sterilisation technicians. "At our health city in Bengaluru, we conduct 79 training programmes to train medical specialists. We are in the process of building a medical school in Ahmedabad Health City," says Shetty. The intention of the academic activity is to train medical specialists of the future.

However, the greatest challenge of hospitals in India is to ensure that medical care is affordable, points out Shetty. "People simply do not have the money to pay for the expensive healthcare intervention. So, we should constantly try to juggle to offer services to the poor and make it affordable for people, who can pay some money," he adds.

Staying true

The aim of the hospital chain remains the same since its inception – to be a reliable, safe and low-cost healthcare provider across the globe. "We strongly believe that the cost of healthcare must come down and that will rapidly increase the customer base," stresses Shetty. For this, the chain has introduced efficiencies such as its recent tie-up with HCL for cloud computing to reduce administrative hurdles, in addition to keeping IT costs under control, and focusing on cost

effectiveness by reducing the luxury aspects that are typical of large hospitals. Conducting more procedures to achieve volumes is another way of effecting affordability for lower income groups to access treatment.

There is also a charitable wing in every hospital aimed for those who cannot afford to pay for the treatment provided. This division also reaches out to donors and raises money by introducing the people who do not have the money to the people who are willing to contribute. "In Bengaluru Health City, we are able to

Prior to creating Narayana Hrudayalaya, Shetty founded the Asia Heart Foundation in Kolkata in 1997 to create awareness on heart diseases and help unfortunate children suffering from the same.

sponsor about 50 – 100 heart surgeries every month by raising money and also charging the patient just enough for the materials every month," says Shetty. Apart from taking the total number of hospitals from 14 to 20 in the coming years, Narayana Hrudayalaya is also building a hospital in Cayman Islands, a British territory in the Caribbean, which should be commissioned in the next 18 months. The company wants to add 30,000 beds within the next five to seven years across the globe.

Shetty concludes with a piece of advice for anyone entering the healthcare industry; he suggests targeting the low-cost healthcare segment that is grossly under serviced. Needless to say, Narayana Hrudayalaya has already identified this opportunity and will continue to strengthen its hold, while reaching out to the masses.

What Next?

- Plans to expand in the country as well as internationally – five more hospitals to come up across India, including Ahmedabad, Mysore, Siliguri and Bhubaneswar
- An international centre is being planned in Cayman Islands, a British territory in the Caribbean, in the next 18 months
- 30,000 beds will be added within the next five to seven years across the globe

—S. Meera

This article was first published in *The Smart CEO Magazine* (www.thesmartceo.in)



Change is Here

“Kids that lack values and family ties are also underprivileged.”

What you probably do know about United Way of Chennai is that the NGO considers caring for underprivileged children as one of its most important missions. What you probably don't, however, is that its definition of underprivileged goes beyond mere financial status. “Kids that lack values and family ties are also underprivileged,” says Shyamala Ashok, Executive Director, United Way of Chennai. “After all, these qualities go a long way in determining how privileged a child is; money isn't the single deciding factor.”

For the last three years (it began in the city in 2010), United Way of Chennai has been at the forefront of social change, its primary mission to “ignite a worldwide social movement, and thereby mobilize to action—to give, advocate and volunteer to improve the conditions in which they live”. Although still in its infancy, there's no denying that United Way of Chennai has indeed achieved a great deal. With an impressive board of directors (names like M A Alagappan, Kiran Shankar, and Lakshmi Narayanan lend the NGO its credibility and identity), and a team that constantly strives to fulfill its vision and accomplish its mission, United Way of Chennai is well on the way to social change.

“Our directors have been an inspiration,” says Shyamala, “Their very names go before them and do a lot as far as the credibility of our NGO is concerned.” Shyamala heads three committees at United, including the Brands and Resource Mobilization committees. “We meet and interact with our directors on the day-to-day functioning of the organization.”

There's no denying that a major part of United Way of Chennai's work is focused on underprivileged children, and more specifically, children from juvenile homes. “We visit juvenile homes across the State, locate young children who have been imprisoned and run the risk of having their futures turned upside down,” says Shyamala, “To these children, we provide an avenue that could enable them lead a future sans crime. We teach them and educate them on values.” Most importantly, however, are the skill-based modules that the NGO teaches the children. “This allows the kids to reform and begin a life for the better.”

In the course of its work, United Way of Chennai has also come a long way as far as building a skill base is concerned. Interestingly, skill-building isn't just restricted to inmates of juvenile homes, but also the physically disabled. “Creating employment opportunities, not only helps these children with a future, but also goes a long way in bridging the skill requirement that most companies suffer from, today,” says Shyamala. Not surprisingly, several corporate enterprises have been among the first to stand up and be a part of the revolution. Companies like HDFC, Nokia, Cognizant, RR Donnelley, Caterpillar, and HSBC are a few such corporate bigwigs. “The role that corporate entities have played in our growth has been phenomenal,” says

Shyamala. Other NGOs that have partnered with United Way of Chennai are Hope Foundation and Nalanda Way.

In a State like Tamil Nadu that has come a long way from poverty, and where empowerment is the go-to word of today, the service put in by United Way of Chennai goes beyond the realm of an NGO doing its bit for a better tomorrow. Take for instance, an elementary school at Kalpakkam that United Way Worldwide built, in association with Hope Foundation. Not only did the school serve to satisfy the needs of underprivileged children in the vicinity, but also went the extra mile to encourage parents (with micro finance), of paying a small fee that would play a key role in their sustenance. The school is currently in its second level of scaling up, and is located at the Tsunami-hit Kancheepuram district.

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“Our corporate partners recognize the significance of their role, and fulfill expectations to the maximum,” says Shyamala. The challenge, according to her, is the process of equipping the public with knowledge of all the NGO does. The need, according to her, is to enable and enhance a process of feedback that she believes will go a long way in improvement. “Feedback from the public is extremely important to us,” she says, “After all, it is precisely that, which paves the way to get better at what we do.”

United Way of Chennai also prides itself on conducting several events in partnership with corporate enterprises. The Wipro Chennai Marathon 2012 was one of them, as was Chennai Cycling 2012 — two of the more notable events conducted in 2012. Along the way, several corporate events such as fundraisers, workshops and skill-impartment courses have also become one with the NGO's functioning. Surely, three years may be too short a time, but the amount achieved in this short span has indeed been more than significant. “But we have a long way to go,” says Shyamala as she signs off, “Striving for social change has been our calling and the coming years will see us continuing in our attempts to achieve just that.”

—Daniel Almeida



Mantra For Prostration Before Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna

[Place: The house of the late Babu Navagopal Ghosh, Ramakrishnapur, Howrah, 6th February, 1898.]

Today the festival of installing the image of Shri Ramakrishna was to come off at the residence of Babu Navagopal Ghosh of Ramakrishnapur, Howrah. The Sannyasins of the Math and the householder devotees of Shri Ramakrishna had all been invited there.

Swamiji with his party reached the bathing ghat at Ramakrishnapur. He was dressed in the simplest garb of ochre with turban on his head and was barefooted. On both sides of the road were standing multitudes of people to see him. Swamiji commenced singing the famous Nativity Hymn on Shri Ramakrishna — “Who art Thou laid on the lap of a poor Brahmin mother”, etc., and headed a procession, himself playing on the Khol. (A kind of Indian drum elongated and narrows at both ends.) All the devotees assembled there



followed, joining in the; chorus.

Shortly after the procession reached its destination, Swamiji went upstairs to see the chapel. The chapel was floored with marble. In the centre was the throne and upon it was the porcelain image of Shri Ramakrishna. The arrangement of materials was perfect and Swamiji was much pleased to see this.

The wife of Navagopal Babu prostrated herself before Swamiji with the other female members of the house and then took to fanning him. Hearing Swamiji speaking highly of every arrangement, she addressed him and said, “What have we got to entitle us to the privilege of worshipping Thâkur (the Master, Lord)? — A poor home and poor means! Do bless us please by installing him here out of your own kindness!

In reply to this, Swamiji jocosely said, “Your Thakur never had in his fourteen generations such a marble floored house to live in! He had his birth in that rural thatched

cottage and lived his days on indifferent means. And if he does not live here so excellently served, where else should he live?” Swamiji’s words made everybody laugh out.

Now, with his body rubbed with ashes and gracing the seat of the priest, Swamiji himself conducted the worship, with Swami Prakashananda to assist him. After the worship was over, Swamiji while still in the worship-room composed extempore this Mantra for prostration before Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna: — **“I bow down to Ramakrishna, who established the religion, embodying in himself the reality of all religions and being thus the foremost of divine Incarnations.”**

All prostrated before Shri Ramakrishna with this Mantra. In the evening Swamiji returned to Baghbazar.

—Source: *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*

Material Comforts – the controversial belongingness determinate

There is a popular belief right from the industrial revolution times that money or ‘M’ factor is a very significant factor. This has also made people working in development sector or social projects feel lesser than the people working in the corporate. If a person moves from the corporate to become a social entrepreneur, it is generally assumed that he/she has the financial stability to sustain the low earning social sector job; or he/she has good connections to get the funding; or is crazy to go behind his/her passion. If this is true for the senior management, the rest of the staff working for corporate rarely move into social sector and many of those beginning with social sector may have aspirations to move to the corporate sector over a period of time. For all these situations, the “M” factor seems to play a role. Therefore, there is a natural conclusion that if a job is paying high and more than the market rate, people can be retained more easily and if not people are likely to leave.

Material comforts dimension in the belongingness inventory relates to the level of compensation, working environment and safety levels provided in the organization to the employees. Interestingly, last month we were involved in running the Belongingness Inventory for a profit driven organization and it revealed that material comforts did not emerge as a significant determinant of feeling of belongingness. The qualitative responses when asked about the belongingness emerged more from emotional connect, learning environment, value for contribution, easier operational processes and the employees were also asking to better the same in order to make them continue to work for the organization.

Most of the social organizations are either not for profit or non-governmental depending on funding from the donors and banks. The finance being stringent, the

compensation is highly volatile factor. The roles and job descriptions are also usually multi faceted due to strong focus on the utilization and justification of every personnel working on the project. Financial compensation is dormant until certain other issues activate it. These issues emerge from insensitivity and non-adherence of certain values like –

- When the social organization is highly bureaucratic and hierarchical where position and earning are highly connected.
- When there is no transparency and a taboo to talk about finance in open. Interestingly most organizations seriously discourage discussing individual compensation and that itself makes the compensation an interesting topic in the grapevine.
- Where there are no clear cut structures, objective and well laid out systems to determine the financial compensation. There are no well developed performance appraisal system and timely feedback and follow-through
- Where there are frequent jobs being changed; roles being added and reduced and none of these seem to have an implication on the financial compensation
- There are too many cliques and smaller groups within the organization and they feel affiliated through comparison and competition amongst each other
- The working space and contributions are all team based but the compensation is individual based. There will be a mismatch, because it will be difficult to determine individual contributions and therefore yearly enhancements cannot be justified
- There are no clear cut growth and career development path within the system



- The Top management and HR are not able to share clear justifications for the decision on certain compensation packages
- There is very wide divide between the Senior, middle and support staff in the use of material comforts but the work does not justify the same
- The compensation structure is not well connected to inflation rate and cost of living of the town/ city the employees work.

In a social organization the expectations of the employees on other components of material comforts like working environment, infrastructure and space seem to be different from that of the corporate. A clean well lit space, fresh air and basic infrastructure is the minimum expected to begin the work and start contributing. Many social organizations and people work on issues that are highly challenging and dangerous too. It is

therefore the moral support and feeling that ‘my organizational members would stand by me’ that gives the safety net.

In the long run there is nothing as easy as managing the systems with core honesty and integrity. The financial compensation and material comforts become a strong determinant of feeling of belongingness only when there is certain amount of injustice felt within and there is no space to share, articulate and seek valid answers to the same within the organizational leadership. The leadership and HR should be able to answer all the questions and justify the decisions before it is being executed. If this can be ensured, the financial compensation will not be activated by the employees as a belongingness determinant.

As a final remark, we can say that everything becomes an issue only when the Social entrepreneur who is driven by passion does not consider this dimension to be in anyway important and would institute the same yardstick to measure others. When some of the employees do not share the same level of passion and sacrifice, then “M” factor becomes a determinant dimension either as a motivator or a de-motivator.

Reflections:

1. How well developed, objective and straight forward are the job/role, appraisal and feedback systems in my organization?
2. To what extent are the income and the expenditure of the social project monitored and key points shared with the members of the organization?
3. On a scale of one to ten how much can I rate my organization’s level of sensitivity, transparency and integrity in financial management?

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath, PhD



CSIM'S ELEVENTH CONVOCATION

The convocation for the eleventh batch of students was held on 20th December, 2012 at Asha Nivas, Chennai. Shri R Nataraj IPS (R), Chairman, TNPSC was the Chief Guest for the event and Dr. L S Ganesh, Dean of Students, IIT Madras was the Guest of Honor.

40 students received their diplomas and certificates and over 100 CSIM alumni participated. Speaking on the occasion, Shri Nataraj said, "Whatever may be your education, as a citizen you should prepare yourself for a global role. Think of what you can achieve and what you can contribute to the civil society."

Dr. L S Ganesh released CSIM's Annual report for the year 2011-2012. "India should be a leader in entrepreneurship. People from all over the world, should visit India to gain entrepreneurship ideas. CSIM's guidance for our MS Entrepreneurship Course has added great value, and we are proud of our association with CSIM," he said.

Mrs. Maheswari received the Best Outstanding Student award, and Mr. Maria Arockia Suthan received the Best Fieldworker award.

Shri P N Subramanian, the Managing Trustee of MSDS distributed bonus funds worth five lakh rupees, that was sourced at the Battle of the Buffet 2012, to 38 CSIM alumni who participated in the event.

Mrs Latha Suresh, Director of CSIM proposed the vote of thanks.

—Marie Banu



“The first thing that the senior citizens want is to be part of a community.”

R.V. Shekar
shares with
Marie Banu
about his new
project that
focuses on
providing homes
for senior citizens.

Lancor Holdings Limited, a Public Limited company listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange, has been creating landmarks in Chennai for over 25 years. Lancor has constantly sought to establish new benchmarks in property development, by offering its customers world-class facilities and finishes.

Its reputation has been built on the cornerstones of transparency and professionalism. Lancor was given ‘The Highest Transparency Award’ at The CNBC Credai Awaaz Real Estate Awards 2009.

In an exclusive interview, R.V. Shekar, Managing Director of Lancor Holdings Limited shares with Marie Banu about his new project that focuses on providing homes for Senior Citizens.

Being a leading builder, what makes your construction quality and services different?

What we have always attempted is to shift our goal post—in terms of quality, specifications, style. This is not only for the affluent section. Lancor has always been building for the less affluent too. Today’s newspaper we released an advertisement stating ‘be wise by spending your money this year’ as we offer apartments for 22 lakh rupees.

People who are less affluent should also get an offering from our company with the same level of comfort. We price our property affordable, and do not reduce the structural quality. Our buildings are capable of standing for over 100 years. Giving good quality at an affordable price is a challenge.

Do you use environmentally friendly practices in your construction?

Although we are a small company when compared to others in terms of size, we have always tried to be innovative and give our customers an extra specification. Our latest offering is to provide pre-fitted air-conditioners in every building. The reason is because people anyway buy air-conditioners.



Photo: Marie Banu

One may consider this as being anti-green. The question is how we can use it in an energy efficient manner, while not damaging the other sections of the building like paints, dripping water, positioning, servicing, etc.

When we put the air-conditioners along with the construction process, we know where to place it, service it, and maintain it. As the purchases are made in bulk, we are able to get a price advantage. We buy energy efficient air conditioners, and create an environment where the cooling requirement is low. We provide double glass so that it will have a twin effect—sound proof and heat proof. This is not something that everybody practices as it involves a lot of money.

It is learnt that you are constructing senior citizen friendly apartments. Can you tell more about this?

I am a senior citizen aged 64. My wife is the principal of Padma Seshadri School. After a long day at work, often times, she says that she is tired. There is a stage when we get a little frustrated with routine. In our country, women by the age of 45 have already put in over 25 years of their lifetime looking after their spouse, children, and grandchildren. It is at this time they want someone to look after them. If food, health care, local transport, limited entertainment, and company is provided then their lives become wholesome.

When several families live together, say 700 to 800 families, we will have to create an environment where they can play, worship, and mingle with each other. Ultimately, the happiness comes only from people. You will not get happiness from having a fantastic apartment which is done with all sorts of gizmos. The happiness is when you neighbor comes and says, ‘how beautiful you have done your apartment’.

We need to create a social infrastructure that allows people to congregate. We have already put our leg into the senior citizen home section which will hopefully be launched in June 2013. It is called ‘Harmonia’ and would function as an independent division, and not as our other property development projects. During the initial stages we will be more personally involved, because it involves senior citizens. It involves understanding of senior citizens and their wants, and we need to tweak ourselves based on what the public and customer perception is. There is a need to create places for food, storage, cold store, entertainment, transportation, medical facilities, etc.

The first concept is that we will not have segregated senior citizen apartments. They will be part of a community. My father is 92 years old and is visually challenged, and my mother was 80 years old when she passed away three years ago. I have been with them for quite some time and therefore understand the feelings of

senior citizens very well. The first thing that the senior citizens want is to be part of a community. They do not want to live in segregation.

To start with, we are constructing 800 apartments in Guduvanchery out of which 300 will be allocated for senior citizens. These will be available on sale as well as for lease.

The rules are the same for everybody. Sporting and club facilities, food service, transport, and medical system will be made available for about 5,000 people and will include in-patient and out-patient medical facilities. Nursing quarters and accommodation for drivers will also be provided.

Similar projects would be established at Sholinganallur and Sriperumbudur that will house more than 1000 senior citizen families.

Given the recent social scenario in our country, as a senior citizen what is your advice for the youth?

We have not managed youth aspirations in the way they expect of us. We have chided them on many issues. In my view, they have a right to ask for safety on streets, to go out whenever and wherever they want. The rest of the community will have to accept that these are constitutional rights and are inherent.

Both women and men are equally vulnerable. What we see in North India is a form of rebellion by a certain class of people who have been oppressed. This might be a different view or argument that I might give and you might think that I am supporting the wrong doers. But, I am not!

There is a class and caste issue here. The class is classified into some grades, where the higher grade is oppressive of the lower grade by doing these things. The higher grade people are throwing an open challenge to the people at the next grade. To me, many of these things which you see are happening all over the country are all form of continued domination by a higher caste of the lower caste.

This can’t be corrected by legislation and death sentence is not a solution. We need to bring in education and tolerance. We need to create a society where we have to agree that there is another way of doing things.

Editorial
Latha Suresh
Marie Banu