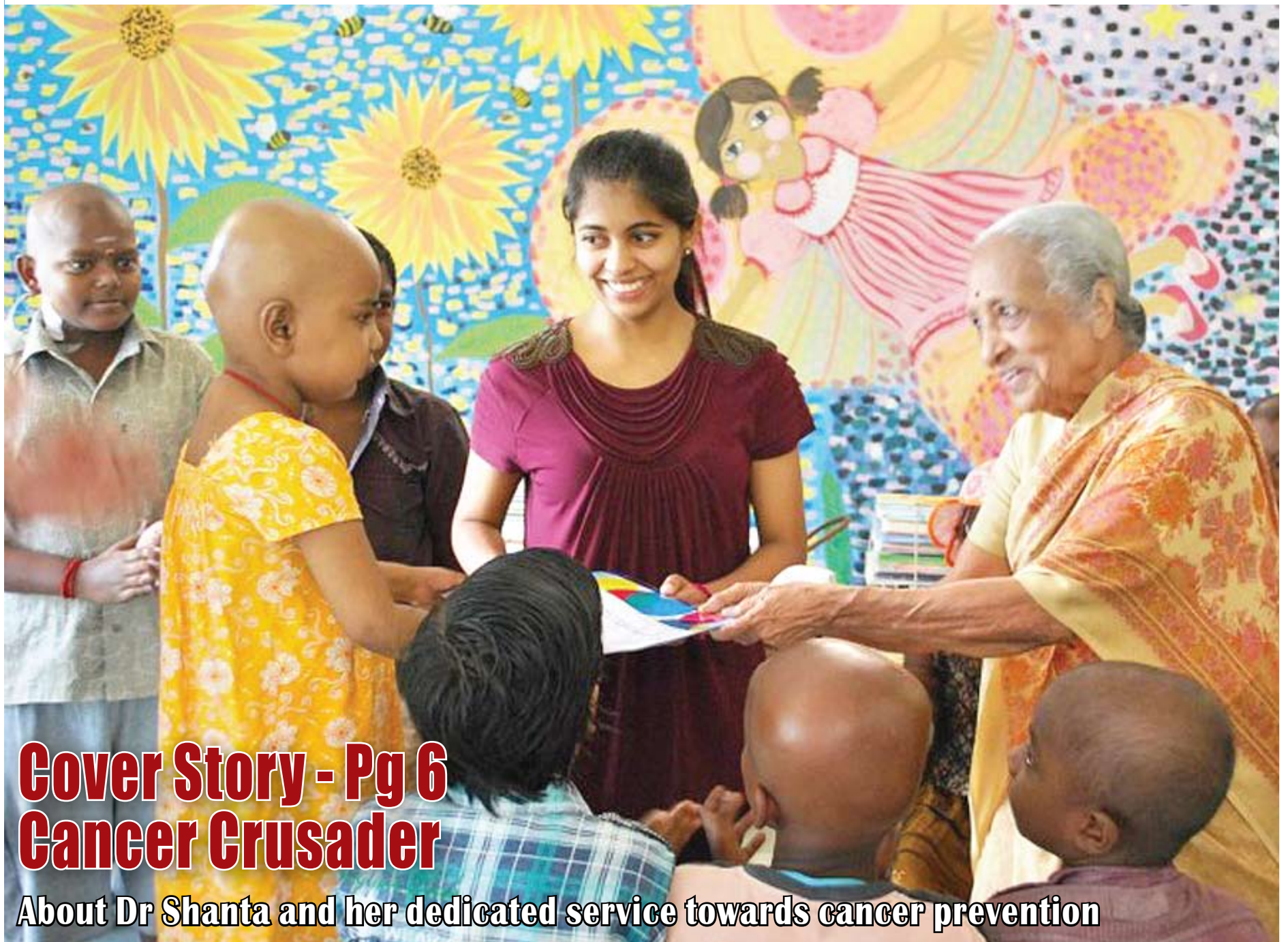


Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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About Dr Shanta and her dedicated service towards cancer prevention



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**“Alcohol is not the only way to
have fun. If you have a choice,
say no to alcohol.”**

An exclusive interview with
Dr. Shanthi Ranganathan

From the Editor

Dear Friend,

As we enter into a new financial year let us celebrate!

Consider work as a primary form of worship and attend to it with reverence. From the King to a common man, everyone has only 24 hours in a day to spend. Unless, we make the best use of our time, we cannot get the best out of our life.

Get all the small things of your life right, and the big reward from life will be your peace. With peace, you will find silence. In silence, you will find God. And, through God, you will find everything else. Bring some selflessness into your life. Serve in some capacity, some cause, expecting nothing in return.

Like the bees, let us transform our work in to a form of worship where-in the results of our work are no longer important to us. The only thing important to us is the desire to do our best while doing the work, out of reverence, adoration and love for the work itself.

When any activity is done with contentment and commitment, and when we are not worried about its outcome then our work becomes worship.

The stories of the changemakers featured in this issue are living proof of this. Do enjoy reading the stories of these selfless iconic individuals who have made a great impact in our society, and have worked tirelessly to bring about positive changes in the lives of many.

—Latha Suresh & Marie Banu

Empty, Yet Complete: Building awareness through Positive Energy practices

“The clay gives support and structure, yet it is the empty space at the centre that makes the bowl useful.”—Dr Paula Horan

A university professor goes to have tea with a teacher. The teacher pours the visitor's cup full and then keeps on pouring. The professor watches the overflow until he can no longer restrain himself. “It is overfull. No more will go in!”

The teacher responds: “Like this cup, you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?”

When I am full of myself, full of my pain, full of comparisons with others, full with knowledge of gaps in me, do I feel complete or incomplete? Incomplete! Surprising, right; because logically, something that is full, is complete. But this is not true when we are talking about our energies.

Imagine a weekend where you feel free, have no nagging thoughts of things to achieve; there is an empty feeling and yet it feels so complete. Again this defies logic!

The other word used to denote the same meaning as emptying, is openness. We often say, open your mind, open your heart. . . . in other words it means empty your mind and your heart to receive that you have been longing for.

The practices that we promote with the Positive Energy Program enable us to be ‘empty’, because in being empty lies the key to breaking learning barriers, creating clarity, and channelizing the release of emotional energy blocks.

FEW PRACTICES THAT HELP ‘EMPTY OR OPEN US’ ARE:

- 1. Feeling and Reflecting on gratitude:** Most often things that make us full are stuff that we consider we do not have or desire to have. By experiencing genuine gratitude, we consciously empty out ‘want-have-desire thoughts’. It serves as a regular reminder of all the things we feel grateful for.
- 2. Meditating:** Pausing to ‘throw out’ the fullness inside our minds. In meditation, we are often told to observe our thoughts and let them go. As we continue to do this, over time, the inflow of thoughts reduce, and at some point we reach a state of ‘thoughtlessness’—this is a state of emptiness, which fills us with bliss.
- 3. Living in the present:** We are constantly living either in the past or the future. In looking into the past, we are grieving over what happened, feeling a sense of loss, lacking, sadness, etc. or we are thinking of the good times which are lacking today. And when we are looking into the future, we are getting anxious and planning for a time which is yet to arrive. In both states, we are ‘full’ and dwelling on a lacking. However, when we live in the present moment, we can give of ourselves completely to the present moment and enjoy it completely. By emptying ourselves and being in the moment, we open ourselves to new experiences and living the present fully.
- 4. Clearing the Conscience:** We are all conditioned about various aspects of living and life from our childhood. The values, culture, habits, beliefs, desires, feelings, behaviors, etc. are ALL programmed into us. We do not ‘choose a value or belief’ from our experience. We first adopt a belief or value or behavior, etc. and then we spend the rest of our lives justifying them. By clearing our conscience we open ourselves to ‘first hand’ experiences and this in turn enables us ‘be in the present’ and practice ‘discerning living’ in every moment.
- 5. Chanting:** This is an age-old



practice that helps us ‘be in the present’ and sharply channels our focus on one point—the chant. This prevents us from ‘filling ourselves up’ and thereby we remain empty and open.

Being empty makes one feel light and one goes about life with a joy and openness that brings life alive.

Yours Energetically

Dr. Bhulakshmi V and Ms. Bhuvaneshwari Ravi are trainers and facilitators of the Positive Energy (PE) program. They are spiritual seekers with a vision of transforming their own energy state from surviving to being. In this journey they have gathered deep insights and are continuously working towards creating a pathway for more seekers. With years of exposure to spiritual practices like yoga, reiki, and personal development interventions like coaching, the authors are working in the Organization Development and Leadership Development space.

This intervention is offered by GapSkills Learning Solutions Pvt. Ltd is being offered to corporates and schools. You can contact them at info@gapskills.com to design a customized intervention for your organization or join the PE open program - www.gapskills.com.

Journey from an Entrepreneur to Social Entrepreneur

Birth of ideas is unpredictable and unavoidable. The potential of some ideas bring in such enthusiasm that concerned individuals will be ready to walk extra miles, no matter how long it might take, to operationalise that idea. How, when and why they go on with the idea is very subjective, depending on the individual's environment. In today's column, we come across Mr Anilkumar Muniswamy, one of the founding directors of SLN Technologies Private Limited.

After completing his Electronic Engineering in 1985, he worked for two companies till 1995. Then, established his new company called SLN Technologies, by partnering with his engineering classmate Subramanyam. "SLN is completely into technology, aiding the manufacture of rugged electronic modules for defence and aerospace. Although a small company with 100 people working for it, SLN was able to create its own space in providing solutions for the electronics industry. Thanks to the projects that came along in our journey," shares Anilkumar. One of their flagship projects, manufacturing of blackbox for fighter aircrafts in the Indian Air Force, was recognised with a national award from the Government of India in 2008.

The resonance of the company's success in developing electronic control systems for India's first mission to moon, Chandrayan was very apparent during the conversation. Soon, they also entered production of control systems for radar. Today, the company boasts of having developed electronic modules for defence and aerospace industries. Alongside the growth of his company, Anilkumar also embarked on an interesting journey with the IPCA – Indian Printed Circuit Association.

In 2002, he pursued his International Masters in Practicing Management at IIM Bangalore. This, along with his Masters in Management from McGill University at Montreal, Canada, leveraged his becoming the Vice President of IPCA in 2000. He was consecutively re-elected six times till the year 2006. "IPCA is a non profit entity that aims to promote Indian industry and also create more jobs in the market. Training and preparing students to find gainful employment gradually took main stage, given its need in the market," explains Anilkumar, who was also instrumental in bringing investments into India. In 2006, he was elected as the President of IPCA, re-elected in 2008, pushing his record as President for 4 years.

His tenure of 10 long years at IPCA exposed him to the idea of training manpower for the Indian industry. "I realised the need for professional training because we saw fresh graduates not comprehending the language of the industry. They lacked the knowledge of markets and technically also, needed to moulded," shares Anilkumar, whose idea to start an International Expo in IPCA brought in fresh opportunities to network and develop. Primarily a trade promotion



event, with participants from different countries like US, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Europe, etc. further shaped his thoughts on the IATC. "Interactions with Mr David Bergman, Vice President of IPC, USA (a non profit in the realm of electronics industry for the last 50 years), at an event's dinner in Japan drew me closer to what I had to do," he says.

Soon, in 2007, IATC was formed with Anilkumar as the Founding President. IATC intended to fill the employability gap more blatant in fresh graduates. A humble target of training 25 candidates had to be preceded by a Training of Trainers programme. 20 candidates who successfully passed out reiterated that this low cost, affordable training made a big difference in their career ladders. The model at IATC was simple. Until 2007, anyone interested in electronics manufacturing industry had to go abroad, incurring a cost of more than 2,000 dollars. IATC worked to provide the same programme at the cost of 10,000 rupees. With assistance on designing this programme, provision of equipments and the initial seed capital coming from IPC, the 3 days programme successfully trained 20 trainees, announcing their potential to enter the industry and contributing from the first day. By 2011, more than 1000 students in India were trained by IATC. As the demand grew manifold, IPC decided to set up their own premises and hired more people to manage demand from the market. "Scaling is good, and must be done by those who can manage the resources and demand. IPC's set up is now capable of training 200 candidates in a month, through network of individual trainers and franchise model."

By now, Anilkumar gained clarity about

the role he can play in the training space for this sector. He became an Advisor on the Board of Electronic Sector Skills Council of India (a Government of India initiative), and helped them develop a lot of training programmes. He tries to elaborate on his interest in training students, "Providing professional knowledge at affordable costs is definitely the need and is very critical in adding value to our work force. Fresh graduates take a minimum of 2 years to understand the industry and its scope. Small companies cannot afford this time and worse is the case when they have to lose the hard trained employees to large MNCs that pay more. On the other hand, there is also the concern of large companies paying less on the premise that candidates do not have adequate knowledge. Consequently, impatience in career growth compels them to hop between jobs. I am certain that professional training can address all these concerns."

CSIM came into picture at just the right time. Anilkumar happened to know about CSIM from the advertisements and enrolled immediately. "These days, a lot of people try to do something they can for the underprivileged. I had adopted two schools and built two classrooms for a government school, way back in 1999. Such service oriented initiatives were sporadic, not organised at all. CSIM's programmes help trainees in doing this more constructively and effectively. That means a lot to the needy population and our sense of satisfaction," he says.

Anilkumar appreciates CSIM for the clarity it brings in one's thinking. "They help us draw a visible line between for profit enterprises, not for profit organisations and social enterprises. A lot of question marks have been cleared and

fresh clarity has come in. Innovation in products or services and bringing them at affordable prices is something any industry has to ponder with. More so for social enterprises so that the most needy are able to access these. Such innovations matter to the masses who have suffered from inability to afford the existing options," shares Anilkumar who has his own plans to start a social enterprise soon.

He adds that the notion of social enterprises has helped him see the potential of affordable products benefiting needy on one hand and also creating employment on the other. He believes that outsourcing such production can also create many entrepreneurs, empowering their families and communities. With all this understanding, he is more clear of what he wants to do. He wants to play an efficient role in marketing products like wooden toys and organic products from Chennapattana to foreign countries. Acknowledging that manufacturing is very strong, he laments their inability to market and thus the difficulty in scaling. So when does he start? "I am trying to assemble elements as a sustainable model and would need one more year to work out the business plan. But am sure, this social enterprise will kick off soon," signs off Anilkumar.

Managing his company SLN and exploring other innards in his sector, Anilkumar has proved that social inclinations can be accommodated in one's area of interest and expertise. Deriving his strength from his experience, he is all set to launch his social enterprise, at the age of 50. True, ideas are unpredictable and the experience they bring in is incredibly enriching!

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Fighting challenges with dignity and determination - Sankara Raman

One often comes across humans who have disorders derived from hereditary factors. Muscular dystrophy, which refers to a group of hereditary disorder, each with unique phenotypic and genetic features, can cause physical challenges. Congenital muscular dystrophy often appears at birth with hypotonic and severe trunk and limb weaknesses. Obviously, afflicted persons find it difficult to lead a normal life, as they are confined to wheelchairs. Like many other physically challenged people, they also tend to give up enthusiasm and the hope of being a normal human being due to the pains they undergo. This is an undesirable consequence, as they too have the right to lead a normal life.

This is the saga of Sankara Raman, who fought this kind of a physical challenge with courage, determination and intellect.

Early days

Sankara Raman understood his limitations early in life, but did not let it deter him. He always wanted to face the world and lead a complete and independent life. He was afflicted with a hereditary disorder and had a sister who was also crippled. He came from a middle class family and wanted to make a difference to the world, just like any normal youth. The challenges were in getting the right mentor and peer group that would help him fight the limitations imposed by his disorder.

From his earliest days, Sankara Raman was studious. After completing his high school he actively pursued the idea of qualifying as a chartered accountant (CA) so that he could find gainful employment and support his family. He took up the graduation in commerce and also chartered accountancy together. He did the three years article under auditor Shivaji in Shivaji and Rao Associates, where he was provided with barrier free access in office and opportunities without any discrimination in audit assignments. He was never treated as a disabled person and no special privileges were offered which was an eye-opener to realize his capabilities and gain in confidence. This is a real time example as to how an employer/ senior can motivate a person with disability. He qualified as a CA with a meritorious record and started his practice. He was sure that he wanted to live his life with dignity and contribute to the world by serving other people with similar physical challenges.

During the initial stage of his life, he was unwilling to accept help to overcome his challenges. If anyone offered him support, he was furious. However, his father, who understood him well, helped Sankara Raman to appreciate and accept the need to take others' help whenever it was practical. Once his attitude changed



in this manner, Sankara Raman was not only pleased with himself, but also made other people around him happy and cheerful. This clear "transformation" laid the basis for what he was to achieve in the later years of his life.

Financial sustainability

We have already mentioned that Sankara Raman did not come from an affluent background. After qualifying as a CA, he faced a further dilemma in deciding just how to pursue his career. One option was to join a corporate and take up a protected life with assured economic status. However, he felt that the corporate sector would see his physical challenge as a limiting factor and would not use him for challenging assignments at work. Hence, he decided that he would not opt for this option, even though it promised financial security.

His father encouraged him to start his own practice as a CA. Sankara Raman faced severe obstacles given his restricted mobility. His professional duties dictated that he travel out of Chennai to towns like Trichy and Salem. He was always dependent on escorts who would accompany him to these places. He had to go through this phase of his life because both financial independence and stability were important necessities at that point of time. He was convinced that being on his own reflected his dignity and his respect for the knowledge he had, which he demonstrated through his commitment to work. From his early stages of life, Sankara Raman held the firm view that a physical challenge can be a limiting

factor, but not an intimidating factor that stops someone from leading a normal life!

Ethical values

He had imbibed strong ethical values in his childhood. In professional practice, he faced the normal challenges of society, such as corruption and disability abuse. He felt the best way to handle these challenges was to fight them: abstain from corruption and not allow himself to be marginalized because of his physical challenge. On the other hand, he did come across very understanding income tax officers and professionals at the office of the registrar of companies. As time went by, he developed the conviction that his knowledge and ethical values could one day become the key factors that allowed him to pursue his ambition of serving his physically challenged fellow beings.

Connecting with peers

Sankara Raman joined the Tamilnadu Welfare Association for Physically Handicapped. He felt the association would not only give him the strength to fight his disorder, but would also enable its members to use different institutions and departments in supporting the community of the physically challenged. At this point, he held the very clear notion that for the physically handicapped, the best way to demonstrate courage would be to fight the negative influences of their handicaps and achieve an independent life. This was preferable to talking on and on about their misfortune and claiming support from private institutions and the

government. He also observed that many physically challenged people were refusing to mix with society and were confining themselves to a small circle, cursing their destiny. The obvious reasons were guilt, shame, self-pity and reaction to social cruelty. He felt strongly that these people needed to get over their mental hang-ups, and that they should be given enough encouragement to attain an independent life. Further, physically challenged people needed to adopt a kind of self-confident approach to achieve a normal life, even when using the help of others.

The initiatives of the association were taking shape in the early 1990s. The government allocated some land near Vandalur (a suburb of Chennai) for the association to set up a rehabilitation center. Dr. Varadakutty, President of the association and a few others were having similar thoughts to Sankara Raman. He used to spend much of his time with them, working on disability rights, while pursuing his professional practice at the same time.

Often, it is hard to make out whether a particular turning point in one's life is destiny, the hand of God or just a random pattern! A turning point came up in Sankara Raman's life. His parents had an opportunity to meet Ramakrishnan of Amar Seva at the residence of Dr. T. S. Chandra, a professor at IIT Madras, in 1991. They were happy with the social service efforts of Ramakrishnan. They encouraged Sankara Raman to meet him. After a few meetings at Chennai and Ayikudy in Tirunelveli District, Sankara

Raman was convinced that it would be a good idea to join forces with Ramakrishnan, who was then working on developing his social service organization, Amar Seva, and in setting up a rehabilitation center.

Challenges

Moving to Ayikudy from Chennai was not an easy decision for Sankara Raman. Ayikudy was a small village, and Sankara Raman had to compromise on his professional practice. He had clientele he could not serve from Ayikudy. However, his nature was such that new challenges always attracted him. The best in him comes out when he most challenged. He accepted the personal challenge of moving into community-based living at Ayikudy. Initially, he shared his time between Ayikudy and Chennai. During this initial period, he had many opportunities to improve the quality of life of the physically challenged, which formed the basis of his ambitious approach to social entrepreneurship in later years.

Sankara Raman always had a thirst for professional knowledge and the gut feeling that knowledge must be used for a decent and respectful lifestyle. Furthermore, one needs to deploy knowledge to enhance the quality of life

of the brethren who live in his community. Whenever there was a need to meet in his community, he never hesitated to take the steps required using the knowledge and momentum he had gained from his interactions with experts in various fields.

Recognition

Sankara Raman was instrumental in incorporating a number of efficiency systems into the operations of Amar Seva. These systems helped him considerably in implementing the ideas of the committee members. He recognized the need to demonstrate leadership at operating levels for optimum contribution to social causes. In various ways, he used the experience he had gained with corporate clients when he practiced as a chartered accountant. He seized on every opportunity to connect with professionals and associations for improving the programs at Ayikudy. Sankara Raman's zeal and vigor in bringing a structured approach to work is worth emulation by all youth. Sankara Raman says, "Though at the outset it might look compulsive, fighting all odds while depending on physical support from fellow humans to move around is challenging. I always think for what purpose I am doing all these things. If it is

purely selfish then it is limiting. If you want to achieve something, you must bring extra energy and spirit to overcome all deterring factors."

Sankara Raman received a lot of support from his family. We have already talked about the major way his parents supported him. His siblings also demonstrated courage and the willingness to fight limitations. His eldest sister had gone trekking in the Himalayas. She went to Canada in 1971 to pursue higher studies and find ways to help the family. She was a great motivator for Sankara Raman. He also has another elder sister who is afflicted with the same condition, muscular dystrophy, which he had. They always thought it fit that they demonstrate extraordinary spirits and individually and jointly contribute to their family and to the larger society. It is worth mentioning here that in fact, Dr. Sumathi is a PhD in commerce and plays an active role in the activities of the Amar Seva community. She served as a professor in a college at Trichy.

At some point in his life, Sankara Raman felt that he should marry and fulfill his family obligations. He has been married for the last 14 years. He manages to balance the demands of his personal life with those of his developmental work. He encourages his wife to pursue

activities of her liking, and likewise, she supports him in his endeavors. My youth readers may note here that it is not just internal understanding that helps harmony; respect for each other's external roles and commitments to those roles matter just as much. Leaders must ensure such practice at home and in the community to achieve a balanced growth.

Conclusion

Sankara Raman has won a number of accolades and awards from national and international organizations. These awards have never swayed him from his purpose. His dream is to spread the loud and clear message that humans who confined to a wheel chair and dependent on others' help for physical activities can still contribute meaningfully to uplifting their brethren who suffer from similar physical challenges. He is convinced that self-respect and pride in independence in thought and action are vital for fighting physical challenges. So much of the misery on this earth would be mitigated if other people suffering from hardships thought similarly spread awareness! We need more thought leaders like Sankara Raman.

— *This is part of the forthcoming book "Incredible Champions" authored by N. Chandrasekaran.*

CSIM and LIBA launches a Master Class in Social Accounting and Audit

Date: 5th and 6th of May, 2014

Venue: LIBA Campus, Nungambakkam, Chennai - 34.

This is an intense training programme spread over 4-6 months including 2 days of training and continuous mentoring support. Objective of the programme is to initiate a group of practitioners into the science and art of Social Accounting and Audit.

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Mrs. Mrinalini Shastry and Mrs Latha Suresh - Social Auditors from Social Audit Network, UK.

For more information, please visit www.csim.in

To register, please call Mr. Sanoj at 9500078804 or write to csimtraining@gmail.com.

Editorial

**Latha Suresh
Marie Banu**

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INITIATIVE AND MANAGEMENT



Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM) is a unit of Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani. It is a learning centre that promotes the concept of social entrepreneurship. **CSIM offers training and consultancy to social enterprises – for-profits and non-profits – to facilitate**

them to apply successful business practices and yet retain their social mission. It also offers training and hand holding support to prospective social entrepreneurs and enable them to launch their social initiatives. CSIM operates in Chennai, Coimbatore, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

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CSIM also facilitates Social Audit for social enterprises through Social Audit Network, UK and SAN, India.
For more information, please contact Ms. Latha Suresh, Director @ 92822 05123 or visit www.san-india.org.

Cancer Crusader

With a number of firsts to its credit, the Cancer Institute (WIA) has been instrumental in introducing the concept of super-speciality training in surgical and medical oncology and founded the first Dr Muthulakshmi College of Oncologic Sciences in 1984.

A life of dedicated service towards cancer prevention and cure - **Dr V Shanta, Chairman, Cancer Institute (WIA), Chennai, speaks to Nidhi Adlakha on her journey so far and her dreams for the Institute and vision 20:20 of making India a cancer-free country.**

Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship. —Buddha

Working towards providing this very wealth to millions battling cancer, Dr V Shanta, is an epitome of persistence and hard work. In her illustrious career spanning over six decades, she has fought her way through numerous obstacles and continues to deal with many challenges hampering cancer care in India.

Belonging to an era when women professionals were few, Dr Shanta was determined to chase her dreams. "I dreamt of being a trained physician, a doctor, from my school days. Back then, a majority of women settled down to a married household life and very few women took up a career. None of this appealed to me and my mother was very supportive of my choices," she says.

Dr Shanta studied at what was then called National Girls High School at Mylapore. Today, the school has been renamed as National Boys and Girls Education Society. She pursued her Intermediate Class (Class 10 to 12) at the Presidency College. "I completed my MBBS from the Madras Medical College, and I had the opportunity to be tutored by exceptional teachers. I went on to pursue a Post Graduate Diploma in Obstetrics and Gynecology and trained at the Women and Children Hospital from 1952-54." Dr Shanta also appeared for the Public Service Commission to enter the State Medical Service and was selected. "I was posted as a lecturer-antenatal care at the Women and Children Hospital, Egmore; this was truly the turning point of my life and career," she adds.

Her active involvement in cancer management was in 1950 when she was posted as a house surgeon at the Cancer Unit of the Government General Hospital (GH) which had just been organised by Dr S Krishnamurthi, who had returned from the US after training in cancer surgery. Dr Shanta says the strongest impression in the cancer unit was the overwhelming flood of patients, advanced disease, the exploitation of the hapless patients by hospital touts and physicians alike and Dr Krishnamurthi, young and idealistic struggling against all these odds. "He encountered unimaginable corruption, witnessed poor cancer patients being exploited by professionals. He often told me, more people live on cancer than die of cancer, which I remember even today and still fight against. Soon after, the cancer unit was closed and all records confiscated. Only the OP remained," she explains.

It was in the same period when for the first time, she heard of Dr Krishnamurthi's mother, Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy, the first woman medical graduate of India at a Sheriff's meeting, organised as part of a fund raising drive for a Cancer Hospital. Dr Reddy organised the Women's Indian Association (WIA) Cancer Relief Fund in an effort to start a separate hospital for cancer care and treatment since there were no facilities for cancer treatment then.



Dr Reddy had lost her younger sister to a misdiagnosed cancer and was a witness to her sister's painful end. She determined to start a facility for cancer and could fulfill her dream only after India's Independence. She sent Dr Krishnamurthi to the US, who later returned to India and founded the Institute in 1954. It was founded as a Voluntary Charitable Hospital for treatment of the underprivileged. "There was very little money and she needed a medical officer. It was April 1955 and I had just qualified for my MD and was the youngest one in Tamil Nadu. I renounced my selection by the Madras Public Service Commission to the State service and joined the Cancer Institute. This was the beginning of her long and untiring journey in the field of cancer care and support.

Under the tutelage of Dr Muthulakshmi, Dr Shanta learnt how important it is to sustain an initiative and ensure that its performance speaks. Speaking of how she has sustained the Cancer Institute over the years, Dr Shanta says, "Back then, gathering support and donors was easy as we had the backing of Dr Muthulakshmi. As we grew, I have learnt that it is your transparency and effort that pays off. Your change should be measured by patient satisfaction and not on monetary grounds." She believes patients play a pivotal role in this process and the message that they take across from the Institute will help spread awareness and automatically bring in goodwill and funding. "People in Tamil Nadu still need to open their minds about donating to social causes. Attitudes are changing and it is a welcome change to note that in the last



one year, 50% of our donations have been unsolicited."

Since 1955, there have been exceptional technological advances in cancer care and cure - and Dr Shanta stresses on the need for a focussed approach to tackle the disease. "I have witnessed an era of incurability evolve into an era of curability". Having said that, common cancers which are tobacco related cancers, cervical and breast cancers

are not only curable if detected early but preventable. Many NGOs are taking up different initiatives. We need to coordinate and integrate them with governmental support. Spreading awareness is of primary importance and it is a painfully slow process," she adds. She highlights that although Tamil Nadu and other southern states fare better in terms of healthcare,

we have a long way to go in battling cancer. "As there is no follow up with patients, we are unable to analyse success rates. Cancer Institute is the only centre in the country that has lifetime records and unless others follow suit, it will be difficult to formulate statistics and success rates and this is why unfortunately, India fares poorly internationally in terms of mortality rates," says Dr Shanta.

With a number of firsts to its credit, the Cancer Institute (WIA) has been instrumental in introducing the concept of super-speciality training in surgical and medical oncology and founded the first Dr Muthulakshmi College of Oncologic Sciences in 1984. They were the first in the

country to introduce the super voltage era, Co60 therapy, in 1956.

She envisions the institute taking up a leadership role and gathering government support as the way forward. "We need to focus on early detection as in the 1950s, only 20% of cases were detected in early stages but things have improved since. Today, over 40% cases are detected early but we need to focus on and reduce the 60% cases detected in later stages." Dispelling myths about cancer takes precedence and she constantly spreads the message that cancer is preventable and curable.

Speaking of her vision for the institute and the country, Dr Shanta, says, "Research plays an important role in tackling such diseases, especially in the field of genetic analysis. We need to work on research to put our achievements over the last decades to use. Secondly, training doctors to be compassionate and follow ethical practices is crucial." Drawing attention to the important role youngsters play, she says, "Over 50% cancers can be prevented and it is shocking to note that 40% of cancers in men are tobacco related and cervical, breast cancers are common among women. Taking preventive measures and early detection can go a long way of youngsters spread awareness on these matters." USA reduced its tobacco consumption to 20% from 50% and India needs to follow suit and ensure the implementation of laws set to regulate tobacco sale and use, and educate the masses.

"Educating children goes a long way in making a difference. The media must take the effort to spread awareness and control advertising that supports tobacco manufacturers," says Dr Shanta.

With social entrepreneurship clearly the buzz word today, and a number of youngsters stepping into the field, Dr Shanta looks at it as a positive trend that needs to be encouraged. However, keeping your focus on one cause is what she believes is needed. "There are numerous individuals and organisations that are doing commendable work and are unheard of and these 'invisible' workers must be supported. In my opinion, enhancing and sustaining these organisations by providing them support would bring a world of change, rather than look at starting many similar organisations," she says.

Her dedicated service towards cancer prevention and organised cancer care for the underprivileged in the country, is an inspiration for many. Her tireless support to the

field of healthcare has garnered her the praise and admiration worldwide. Apart from the 60 awards from government and private organisations, Dr Shanta is the recipient of the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service (2005) and Padma Bhushan (2006). She has published numerous research papers and participated in many international and national conferences. Speak to her about her success and recognition she has received, a very humbled Dr Shanta says, "As Dr Abdul Kalam, former President of India repeatedly says, the organisation you work for, the nation of which you are a part is above the individual. There is so much to do, think and act towards betterment of the Institute that there is hardly time to think of anything else."



Wondering which legal structure to choose for your social enterprise?

One of the most important decisions to be made before launching a social enterprise is choosing a legal structure.

Why is this important? There are a number of reasons and implications as to why it is important to pay attention to legal structure. Some of them are: how the social enterprise gets funded, how the profits (if any) get distributed, governance structure, reporting responsibilities, tax liabilities, and ownership pattern.

India, unlike many other countries – like the US and the UK – does not have plenty of leeway in terms of legally structuring a social enterprise. In the US, for example, there are many options, which have been specially carved out keeping the needs of a social enterprise in mind. They are low-profit limited liability company (L3C), Benefit Corporations, Certified Benefit Corporations (B Corps) and Flexible Purpose Corporations.

India, on the other hand, has limited options in terms of legal structure. Broadly speaking, there are four types of legal structures that social enterprise can opt for. We give you a gist of each one of them, along with the pros and cons.

Non-profit or public charitable organization:

Non-profits can register as a Trust (under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882), a Section 25 company (under of the Companies Act, 1956) or as a Society (pertaining to societies registration, of the concerned state). The biggest benefit of registering as a non-profit is the eligibility to get tax benefits under the Income Tax Act of 1961 and they can also accept foreign donations under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. The non-profit model is best suited for start-ups that do not expect revenues from their activities or have a long gestation period before they start to accrue revenues. Examples of non-profits include Agastya Foundation, Teach for India, Digital Green and Akshaya Patra Foundation. They strive to achieve scale and replicate their work across many geographies using commercial strategies. Their way of sustaining themselves financially is through grants and donations. One of the problems with this model is that perhaps the inability to hire top-class talent or invest in latest technology and infrastructure.

Pros: Ability to focus solely on creating social impact without the pressure of financial return.

Cons: Constant need to raise funds.

The for-profit social enterprise:

In India there are many choices when it



Image courtesy: <http://www.psdnetwork.com>

comes to setting up a for-profit social enterprise. Broadly, there are five different types of for-profits: sole proprietorship, partnership, limited liability partnership, private firm and co-operative.

This type of legal structure is perhaps best suited for social enterprises that are looking for growth and profitability. It comes as no surprise, according to a study by Intellectap, Indian social enterprises 80 per cent of those polled, structure themselves as for-profit private limited companies (PLCs). Examples of for profit social enterprises include Vaatsalya Healthcare, Ujjivan Microfinance and dLight. These social enterprises have usually cracked the market, and have a product or service that consumers have accepted, and are willing to pay money for. Also, because of their for-profit structure, they have the ability to accepting funding from VCs and issue shares and go public.

Pros: Ability to attract funding from VCs, pay top dollar for good talent and

invest in technology and infrastructure.

Cons: Sometimes focus on profits leads to mission drift that makes the original shareholders and stakeholders unhappy.

The hybrid model:

These type of social enterprises start off as a non-profit or for-profit and then launch an exact opposite twin. Some of the reasons are fairly straight-forward. As funds start to dry up for non-profits they are under pressure from their funders to focus on revenue generating activities. This leads to them launching a for-profit sister entity. Head Held High Foundation, for example is a non-profit that promotes rural entrepreneurship, under its fold are two for-profit organizations- Head Held High Services Pvt. Ltd and Magic Wand Empowerment. The Times of India wrote about the hybrid model in a November, 2013 article, highlighting companies like Fractal Foundation, Waste Wise Trust and Under The Mango Tree. When it comes to for-profit social enterprises, they launch a

non-profit so that they can attract donations and grants, which can be used for activities like training, research or subsidizing a product or service.

Clearly this is a great model that ensures that social enterprises can both attract donations and grants, and still be able to have access to social venture funding.

Pros: This is the best of both worlds, allowing a social enterprise to separate the social and revenue generating activities.

Cons: Focusing on both types of entities could be a problem and so the issue of building a common culture.

Disclaimer: Our aim is provide you with a broad understanding of legal structures, please consult with legal and tax experts before making a decision.

—Nelson Vinod Moses

This article was first published at www.social.yourstory.in.

Everywhere for Children

Statistics on children in India have always cried loud for concerted efforts in order to make children's holistic growth and development a priority. With many government and non-government organisations doing the ride in this regard and special efforts in different states to incorporate child rights as part of the election manifestos of political parties, it is only timely that we spent some time to learn the story of one of the country's oldest establishments protecting and promoting child rights in Tamil Nadu.

Post Indian independence, there was growing realisation amongst many leaders that most Child Care Institutions in many states were run by religious organisations. The need for a secular body working for children, with a pan Indian presence gained prominence. In 1952, Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) was thus founded as a national level NGO under the auspices of the then Health Minister. Notably, the seeds were sown by many women freedom fighters. ICCW's primary objective was to serve as a platform for launching different initiatives for the benefit of the country's children. The National Body's work is complemented by respective State Councils, which are all now registered as independent bodies, affiliated to ICCW, New Delhi.

ICCW – Tamil Nadu was established in 1953 under the aegis of Smt. Manjubashini, a great freedom fighter and a staunch follower of Gandhian principles. Today, ICCW-TN stands as a pioneering organisation in the state, protecting children and influencing many others in this realm. ICCW-TN has its branches in all the Districts of Tamil Nadu, with District Collector as its ex-officio President. Special Programmes are being implemented in the Districts of Madurai, Virudhunagar, Krishnagiri, Kanyakumari, Cuddalore, Vellore, Trichy, Nilgiris, Thanjavur, Thiruvallur, Tirunelveli, Kancheepuram, Salem and Nagapattinam.

ICCW-TN's work is spread across three planes – direct intervention, capacity building of key stakeholders, and advocacy. All these efforts are supported by the extensive documentation at the council that progresses as a parallel activity alongside other projects and programmes. One of their projects in Usilambatti proved that consistent interventions supported by capacity building of the communities can go a long way in moulding people's mindsets.

Usilambatti is infamous for its record of female infanticide and foeticide. ICCW-TN began to work on the prevention of female infanticide and initiated multiple programmes here. The district that recorded 200 killings per year in 1987-1988 came on headlines for



another reason in 2001. It was the first year with no female infant killings! As the change in people's attitude towards the girl was more apparent, ICCW-TN changed course in the following years to suit the needs of the community.

Presently, ICCW-TN focuses on empowering girl children by facilitating education sponsorships and other such interventions. Also, work is administered through the 350 SHGs formed by the Council. Another notable of their projects is the Tsunami Response project that was implemented in five coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. Counselling services, building of houses, sponsorships for children, etc were some of the components of this project. These programmes are still functional in Kanyakumari and Cuddalore districts, the worst tsunami affected districts. Comprehending that the impact of disasters like this leave the children most traumatised, ICCW-TN designed exclusive programmes that will help children's development in a family or community set up.

Another project that needs a mention is the one implemented by ICCW-TN in Virudu Nagar, Srivilliputhur district – Child Labour Relief Project. In 1993, the district teams worked tirelessly with 3000 children who were engaged in 139 match factories. The launch of Women Self Help Groups, Training programmes for enforcement personnel, well-planned advocacy, awareness programme on dangers of child labour, and motivational programmes for youth were some of the early efforts initiated to thwart child labour.

On the other hand, enrolling and retaining children in schools was seen as the only possible way of keeping children away from labour. Village

were introduced to eradicate child labour in this district.

ICCW-TN is very categorical about its support services for children. Parents and relatives are supported through sponsorships in order to prevent institutionalisation. Kinship care or single parent care is facilitated so that children do not miss the atmosphere of family and community in their formative years. More than 450 sponsorships in Chennai and another 300 in Cuddalore and Kanyakumari are being provided presently.

ICCW-TN also runs crèches for children in 5 districts in the state, helping women in the agricultural sector and

others. Unlike commercial day care centres, children are provided with noon meals and health services. 3 children's homes and Child Line in Chennai and Cuddalore are also administered by ICCW-TN.

The Council is the only training centre that caters to Supervisors of ICDS (Integrated Child Protection Scheme) centres in the state. As a pioneer in training child care workers in the government departments and others, the Council has evolved a multi-disciplinary training module that will address the needs of all those

working for the protection of children. The Council also has an Information, Documentation and Research Unit to abet its advocacy efforts. Regular publications provided insight on the plight of children in the State and also advocated policy level recommendations. One of their publications exclusively analysed the budget for children in Tamil Nadu, adding discrete value to the debate on the need for child budgeting to be made mandatory. Studies are also undertaken on subjects related to child rights and pertinent topics. Presently, a study on residential care has been undertaken. The library here has an exhaustive collection of articles and books on child rights, child abuse, child development, child health, etc.

Six decades of work for the cause of children has won them several accolades. But more importantly, ICCW-TN has achieved that merit, giving the space to be active and articulate about government's policy decisions. With every success, they have identified the subsequent need requiring their intervention and thus, the journey continues, inspiring and supporting many stake holders, in the best interest of our children.

—Shanmuga Priya.T



Education and Development Committees (VEDC) were formed with the local people on board and thrust with capital to be given as loans influencing parents from marginalised communities to send their children to school. The project that started in 10 villages, expanded to 110 villages in a decade's time. In 2001, 83 villages were declared child labour free!

As the child labour scene improved, the Council met with the challenge of guiding children who had completed 10 years of schooling but had no technical skills. Lack of Employability drove them back to the match industry and some joined the textile mills. To avert this crisis, the Sudar Community College was established, giving these adolescents space for skill accumulation, thereby leading to gainful employment.

In Srivilliputhur, the ICCW team worked with the mothers of children from the 3 most backward blocks in Krishnagiri District. SHGs of mothers were formed to help them earn a supplementary income that will aid their children's education. Soon, networking with 21 government schools also came in handy to control school drop outs. Other services like transport facilities, bridge schools and teacher training programmes

Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

An inspiring conversation with Shri. Ramana Maharishi and his disciples

D.: Which is the best of all the religions? What is Sri Bhagavan's method?

M.: All religions and methods are one and the same.

D.: Different methods are taught for liberation.

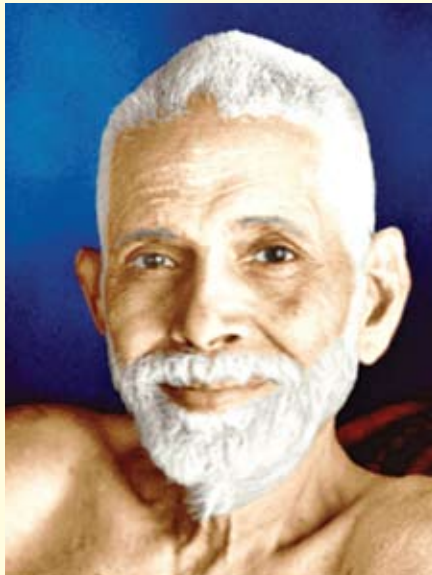
M.: Why should you be liberated? Why not remain as you are now?

D.: I want to get rid of pain. To be rid of it is said to be liberation.

M.: That is what all religions teach.

D.: But what is the method?

M.: To retrace your way back.



D.: Whence have I come?

M.: That is just what you should know. Did these questions arise in your sleep? Did you not exist then? Are you not the same being now?

D.: Yes, I was in sleep; so also the mind; but the senses had merged, so I could not speak.

M.: Are you *jiva*? Are you the mind? Did the mind announce itself to you in sleep?

D.: No. But elders say that the *jiva* is different from Isvara.

M.: Leave Isvara alone. Speak for yourself.

D.: What about myself? Who am I?

M.: That is just it. Know it, when all will be known; if not, ask then.

D.: On waking I see the world and I am not changed from sleep.

M.: But this is not known in sleep. Now or then, the same you remain. Who has changed now? Is your nature to be changing or remain unchanging?

D.: What is the proof?

M.: Does one's own being require a proof? Only remain aware of your own self, all else will be known.

D.: Why then do the dualists and non-dualists quarrel among themselves?

M.: If each one minds his own business, there will be no quarrel.

—Excerpted from talks with Shri Ramana Maharishi

Belongingness Dimensions – Organizational Spirituality and Social Entrepreneurship

When people within the organization believe in the organization and its vision and values, the belongingness is stimulated automatically. What can bring that belief and trust? We have already looked at the nine dimensions of belongingness in our earlier articles. Along with the nine dimensions one that brings in a psychic connect, is the history of the organization. History always has played a key role in instilling pride and connectedness. The history of the organization is nothing more than significant stories and learning that is extracted from the experiences. These stories are powerful means of communication for employee engagement as well as employee belongingness if used properly.

Story telling especially in the East has always remained a powerful means of disseminating values from generation to generation. Ancient stories and parables have been storehouses of learning. The Zen, Sufi, Biblical stories, Jatakas, Panchatantra, Hindu mythology, Aesop's fables and Chinese literature have used stories to facilitate better human understanding and thereby a deeper enquiry into the values. The Panchatantra, famous for stories on values was originally in Sanskrit language written anytime between 100 BC and 500 AD. They were formulated by a teacher called Vishnu Sharma, to teach worldly wisdom to the four dull-witted sons of a king in South India. Originally the famous Jataka tales which has many animal characters in it were actually the happening in the ashram amongst the teacher and students. But for easy dissemination of the learning, those were documented in the form of stories and later on converted with animal characters that people love most.

'The human heart seeks the truth in which alone it finds liberation and delight. Alas, the first reaction to truth is hostility and fear. But, caught in the trance of 'Once



upon a time' the message gets across to listeners, because one can oppose the truth, but who can resist the story?' Vysya, the author of the Epic Mahabharatha says, "If you listen carefully to a story you'll never be the same again. It is because a story will worm its way into your heart and break down the barriers to reality" (Mellow 1987 P.xxi). Richard Bandler and John Grinder who are pioneers in the area of Neuro-Linguistic programming in their book 'Frogs into Princes', prefer using metaphor artistically. 'I don't have to listen to clients' woes, and I get to tell very entertaining stories. Clients are usually bewildered, and often infuriated, that they have to pay me to listen to my stories. But the changes they want occur anyway... another way to make sure there is no dependency. You do things covertly that they don't have the faintest idea what you are doing and the changes they want occur any way' (Bandler, 1979).

The social organizations documentation and communication of the experiences of the organization becomes a powerful communication for employees to understand the spirit and values of the organization. It's interesting to note something significant about memory of the people. When they are with themselves

they recollect a lot of good as well as difficult incidents. But when it is shared memory difficult incidents spreads faster than a positive incident. Therefore, it is HR's accountability in an organization that the values of the organization are disseminated through the real life experiences preserved in the form of stories. No one can deny the power of grandparent bedtime stories and narrations leading to development of core beliefs and values within the person.

The activity of documentation of experiences in a social organization is usually taken for granted and limited to some report writing. But if done well with structure, meaning, symbolism and understanding it can become a powerful disseminator of insights and wisdom stored in the minds of the people who have walked with the organization. More important is also the spaces where the same can infiltrate into the psyche of the culture of the organization. The documentation and dissemination of stories can leave behind

- Strong internal advocacy for the organizational values
- Feeling of connect, pride and ownership with the organization
- A deeper meaning and understanding of the people and the processes within the organization
- A touch with the insights and wisdom from the experiences of the people
- A deeper understanding of the success and failure factors in the field that the social organization is engaged
- An opening of possibility of change and realignment of the vision and values where necessary with the changing times
- A forewarning of the possibility of repetition of the history and therefore the outcomes which can be averted effectively

- An excellent possibility of connect with the head and heart of the employees and the teams
- One of the most powerful reflection exercise for the employees to learn from experiential process

Storytelling and documentation is just not a compendium of happenings and incidents within the organization connected to the environment, but it is the structured form of narration connecting the

- vision, purpose, goals of the organization at various times
- values, processes, strategies and actions that were taken
- the reason and extent of clarity that made the leaders take decisions
- implications of each of those decisions on the organization, person and the environment

Dissemination needs to be in multiple modes appropriately knitted into the subtle fabric of organizational existence through oral, written, visual, symbolism and many other mediums strung together and dropped appropriately through mindful processes. The idea is to leave behind the essence and meaning of existence that has evolved within the organization rather than mere memories and experiences. There is no one good day to sit and document. It is a constant process that is a part of organizational existence and growth.

Reflections:

1. How much do I know of the origin, thought and feelings that makes my organization?
2. What would be the best and the most difficult moments and insights that I would want to share about my organization to people?
3. How much organizational time is devoted to reflection and documentation of experiences?

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath

How to set up a socially responsible company?

Mindtree Foundation's leader, Abraham Moses says that the first step in this direction is for the top management to exhibit such qualities; more specifically, to internalise CSR and use the company's area of expertise to give back to the society.

Most of us aim to be good citizens. We recognise the need to be socially responsible and strive to work towards it in our own small way. However, when a larger organisation takes up the role of a Good Samaritan, the benefit that the society reaps is much larger in magnitude. Mindtree, a global technology solutions company, is one such company that made social responsibility a part of its DNA, right from the time it was incorporated. During its 9th anniversary in 2007, it created Mindtree Foundation, a non-profit organisation, to work globally in the area of supporting primary education and people with disability, providing assistive technologies and software solutions.

Mindtree Foundation is designed to empower and motivate Mindtree Minds to actively contribute to social causes through its technology systems and solutions. In fact, it goes beyond the philanthropic interventions and engages with the communities that it helps. Mindtree Foundation's head, Abraham Moses, who has been a part of Mindtree right from the beginning, believes in preaching what he practices and believes that being a socially responsible citizen is the first step towards building a company that can reflect this philosophy.

In this edition of Startup School, he shares his views with Poornima Kavlekar of The Smart CEO on what it takes to set up a socially responsible business.

Please share some must-dos that an entrepreneur should know before he establishes the company's CSR initiative.

Being socially responsible does not mean that one needs to run a program and allocate funds for it. One must make it part of his or her life and exhibit these qualities in everything he or she does and create a positive energy so that people can be inspired. From my experience in Mindtree, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is in the DNA of the organisation and it is evident in our business plan, value system, and in our vision and mission statements. To become a socially responsible organisation, the leader and the team that leads it should commit to being socially responsible and make it a way of their life. The team, which started Mindtree, had such in-built qualities and made CSR a part of their lifestyle.

For Mindtree, compliance systems were crucial and we were transparent with everything. In hindsight, we know

that internal communication also helped in spreading our social mindset to our employees and customers.

In my previous role in administration and facility management, I used to interact with various vendors frequently. What guided me in having a successful vendor relationship were our chairman's strong guidelines that every transaction has to be a win-win and how important it is to help our vendors grow along with us.

When a leader guides the team to work only towards a win-win transaction, that itself means being socially responsible.

Lesson: Top management should exhibit qualities of being socially responsible, internalise CSR, communicate it within the organisation and make it a part of their life.

During the early days of Mindtree, when it was not yet a large company, how did it approach CSR?

In our early days, we were very careful in spending our investors' money. To quote an example, I was asked to buy a non-AC Maruti 800 for Subroto Bagchi, the co-founder of Mindtree, for his use. During his tenure with Wipro, Subroto used to drive a Sedan. However, when he started this company, he said that a start-up should have simplicity and until he proves himself, he is not eligible for such luxuries. For me, simplicity is a very important trait, which he exhibited.

Lesson: Practice what you preach genuinely.

Please talk about some of the projects that Mindtree worked on in the early phase. What lessons did you learn from these early efforts on giving back to society?

As far as Mindtree is concerned, there is

a story about our support to Somanahalli in Dharmapuri district. Within six months of incorporating Mindtree, our chairman received a letter from a villager who worked as a driver for an executive in a private company. The driver had highlighted the poor state of his village, especially the lack of a proper school, which is the reason why people like him migrate to the city to earn their livelihood. He read about our company and our aim to do something in the education space as part of our CSR project and urged us to do something for his village. Our chairman took this note seriously and found out facts about this village. Subsequently, we created a strong bonding with the village. This was even before we established our business and we were not very cash rich then. Today, we have set up classrooms, computer laboratories, tailoring institute and a women's help group in the village. We are also sponsoring higher education for around 16 children and 9 of them are doing their engineering.

Lesson: Take every cause seriously. Do your due diligence before you lend your support.

What is your advice to early stage entrepreneurs on getting their team to internalize CSR? Please explain with an anecdote from Mindtree.

Even as the entrepreneurs firm up their business plan, they should simultaneously create a platform for their employees to do something for the society by using their expertise. In Mindtree, I can choose social work as an objective for myself. This means, I have the option of doing something to the society in my own capacity and interest. If an organisation can create such freedom and give opportunity to its employees by involving them in any kind of CSR activity, that is a great way to begin. It could be any activity - volunteering, meeting people from disadvantaged backgrounds and spending time with them, teaching life skills to teenagers, and so on.

Let me give you an example from Mindtree. When Mindtree started a formal CSR initiative five years ago, we wanted to do something technology-related for the community, especially for children from spastic schools and people with cerebral palsy or musculo-skeletal disorders. To build awareness about the developments in the field of Assistive Technology, Mindtree

Foundation joined hands with the Spastics Society of Karnataka. Through its initiative, 'Affordable Assistive Technology Solutions for the Disabled', Mindtree has utilised multiple technologies to address the needs of such individuals. We are collaborating with such NGOs and offering our

solution to make the lives of these children more beautiful.

Lesson: Give freedom and opportunity to your employees by involving them in any kind of CSR activity.

Can you share examples of two projects where Mindtree Foundation has had a reasonable impact without spending much?

We did not spend much on the assistive technology project that I mentioned above. Instead, we chose to invest our intellectual and technical expertise in giving back to the society. Let me explain the technology a little more. We created a technology device called "ADITI". This helps children with cerebral palsy and autism. IIT Madras developed a simple solution but they did not know how to take it forward. We added our engineering value, reduced costs, made it a full product and it is now under production. Aditi is a simple access switch for children with cerebral palsy to use computers easily. Through computer knowledge, they can later earn their livelihood. This made a huge impact on about 200 children in Chennai.

Another solution, "KAVI," was developed for children with autism, especially kindergarten, children who did not know how to speak in English. This solution helps them to communicate with their teachers and parents. KAVI is being used in a special school called FAME.

We did not invest much in any of these solutions except for our expertise. Essentially, an organisation should use its core strength to create such gadgets in a cost effective manner.

Lesson: Invest your intellectual and technical expertise

What is the process you follow to review your CSR projects?

When any institution approaches us, first we check if it aligns with the Mindtree Foundation Charter, check their credibility, their balance sheet, their mission and achievements towards the cause.

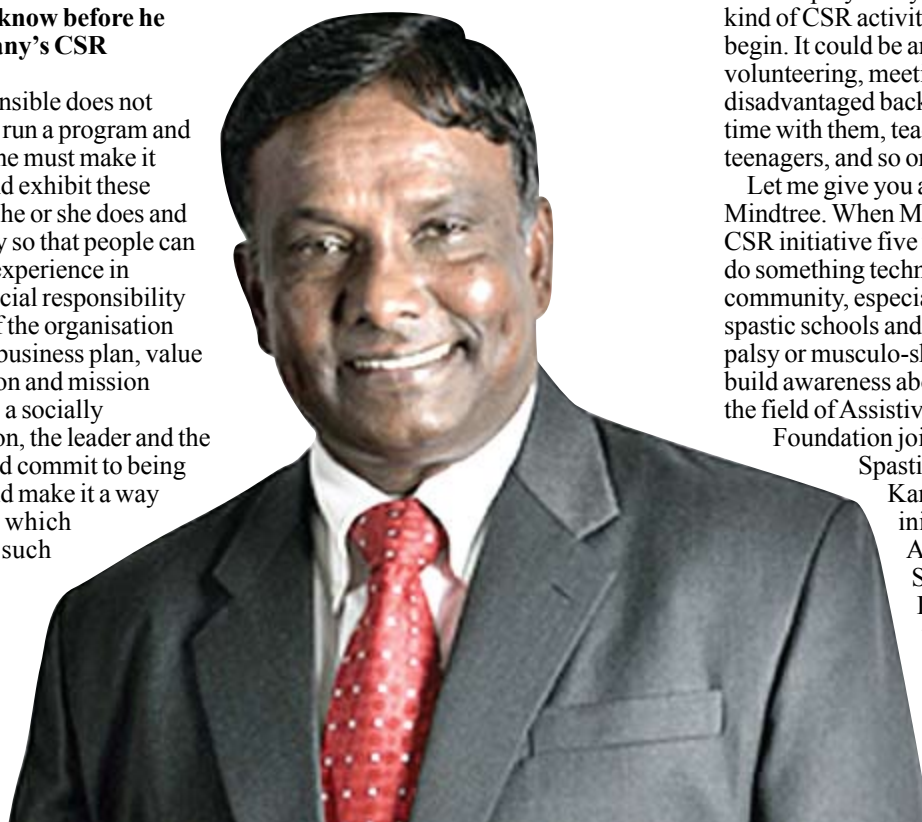
Lesson: Evaluate and validate all the projects you support

How does an early stage company integrate its social activity with the business strategy?

Start your business plan with good corporate governance in place. Ensure that you are sensitive towards social needs of differently abled, take up green initiatives, and so on. Also, ensure that your internal policies supporting all this is rightly stated and documented.

Lesson: Have your corporate governance in place, be sensitive towards social needs and as repeated often, internalise it.

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



“Alcohol is not the only way to have fun. If you have a choice, say no to alcohol.”

Dr. Shanti Ranganathan shares her views on alcoholism and how it can be treated.

Padmashri Dr. Shanthi Ranganathan is the Founder, Director of TTK Hospital, a non-profit, pioneer voluntary organization involved for more than three decades in the holistic treatment and rehabilitation of persons addicted to alcohol and drugs.

Dr. Shanti Ranganathan is the recipient of the Padmashri Award in 1992 from the Government of India and the United Nations Vienna Civil Society Award in 1999, which was presented to her by the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan.

In an exclusive interview with Marie Banu and Latha Suresh, Dr. Shanti Ranganathan shares her views on alcoholism and how it can be treated.

You have been working in the area of alcoholic addiction treatment and rehabilitation for over 34 years. What are the social issues caused due to alcoholism?

Poverty is the major issue caused by alcoholism. Violence, suicide amongst women, health related issues, and accidents are others.

What steps have you taken to reduce alcoholism in our state?

In any community when use of alcohol reduces, alcoholism also reduces. Along with this the negative consequences related alcohol use such as health problems, accidents, etc also reduce.

While total prohibition is an option, most Indian states rely heavily on the revenue generated from the sale of alcohol to meet the expenditure of the state Government. A NIMHANS study showed how the Government spent a lot more on alcohol related problems when compared to the revenue generated from sale of alcohol. In this situation until the State Governments implement prohibition, there are other measures that can be taken to reduce negative impact of alcohol use.

In the first place the number of alcohol selling shops can be restricted and the hours of operation can be reduced. The Government can make a decision not to increase the production of alcohol over the years and limit the quantity produced.

The cost of sale of alcohol definitely influences the quantity of consumption. Therefore with the TASMAL having monopoly over the sales, the Government can increase the cost of alcohol which will influence the consumption levels. Out of every 10 people who drink alcohol, two people will become alcoholics. Alcoholics cannot reduce or restrict their drinking. This increase in price will not help influence the already dependent alcoholic population. For the alcoholic, giving up



Photo: Marie Banu

totally is the only option. But, increase in cost will influence all the other people who drink.

Have you taken any steps to sensitise the corporates on social drinking and its limits?

We had a major project with International Labour Organization where we helped industries to formulate a policy with regard to alcohol. This policy helped increase awareness about alcohol amongst the employees, provided guidelines to supervisors to identify problem alcohol use which influences work performance. The Hindustan wrote a policy and Mr. Ramajayam released it. Hindustan Motors at Thiruvallur also evolved a policy, amongst several others. This policy states that if any employee comes to work under the influence of alcohol, they should not be allowed to enter office.

The policy focuses upon drinking, its impact in work space and amongst employees, and the action that needs to be taken. Organisations also coordinated a promotion programme encouraging alcoholics to seek help for de-addiction and even offered to pay their treatment charges.

We organize awareness programmes for companies; and training for managers and supervisors to identify alcoholics and teach them how to deal with such employees.

With the employee, we do not discuss about his drinking, but instead talk on the negative effects it has on his work. For instance, the symptom could be: coming late for work and leave early; availing leave on Friday, complaining of persistent headaches; frequenting the toilet; unable to keep awake during night shifts; reduced efficiency; missed deadlines; and fighting with colleagues.

With influx of migration for corporate employment, more women consume alcohol than before? Your comments?

The number of women seeking treatment for de-addiction has not tremendously increased. They have not become addicts because of social pressure and their responsibility towards their children. The number of women social drinkers and small drinkers have increased, but women alcoholics who need help are very few. That is a big relief!

Unlike western countries, there aren't any women centric centres in India to treat alcoholics. It has not become an issue for us as yet to be worried about.

In what way is treating addiction in India different from other countries? Do you use tele-counseling for treatment?

In India, we take into consideration our culture and norms and our treatment procedure has gone through a lot of

modifications and changes.

Tele-counseling is not a mainstream activity as yet! We use it only for follow up. Each of our counsellors are provided with a mobile phone. When a patient is unable to come in person, he calls the counselor to seek guidance.

At our institution, the first criteria to admit a person for treatment is family support. We insist the patient to be accompanied by one of their family members-spouse/parent/relative. We also extend the counseling programme to the family members. If a patient does not have a family to support, we try to create the family, like his uncle or aunt who can be contacted to help him.

What is your advise for the youth of today?

There are many healthy ways in which one can have fun. Alcohol is not the only way! If you have a choice, say no to alcohol. Even if you take alcohol, be a responsible drinker. Do not drive under the influence of alcohol, and do not consume alcohol on a regular basis. Never have more than two drinks at a time. There are many ways in which you can stay as a responsible drinker. Have meals before drinking alcohol.