

# Conversations Today

*Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises*

RNI No.TNENG/2013/52428 | Volume 3 | Issue 8 | August 2015 | 12 Pages | For Free Circulation Only| [www.msdsrtrust.org](http://www.msdsrtrust.org)



## Cover Story - Pg 6 Change is in the Chennai air

About Madras Day Celebrations



**Published by** P.N.Subramanian on behalf of  
Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani,  
391/1, Venkatachalapathi Nagar, Alapakkam,  
Chennai - 600 116 and printed by him at  
Express Press, Express Gardens, No.29, Second  
Main Road, Ambattur Industrial Estate,  
Chennai - 600 058.  
**Editor :** Marie Banu  
Phone : 044-42805365



### Alumni Talk Pg 3

**Educating through Arts**  
Keerti Jaiswal's mission to  
promote a new and innovative  
practical learning experience  
for children



### Profile Pg 9

**Ostracisation due to different  
interests**  
About Sahodaran, a community  
based organisation that works for  
MSM in Southern India



### Chit Chat Pg 12

**"More and more women are  
highly educated, well employed  
and pushing boundaries.  
Women have moved up in the  
socio economic ladder."**  
An exclusive interview with  
Advocate Geeta Ramaseshan





## From the Editor

Dear Friend,

The first city of modern India—Madras—was founded on 22nd August 1639. The city is now celebrating its 376th birthday. Kolkata is 50 years younger than Madras and Bombay is about 35 years younger.

The entire month of August is dedicated to the history, culture and traditions of the city. It commemorates the founding of the city by establishing Fort St George on a small piece of land acquired from the last King of Chandragiri in 1639 by the British East India Company. Rechristened as Chennai in 1996, the capital of Tamil Nadu is now home to more than 4.8 million people. Chennai is famous for education, healthcare, IT, history, tourism, auto industries, movies, etc.

Chennai is also the home for hundreds of NGOs, the oldest being Monegar Choultry, the first organised charity in Madras city that was launched in 1782. The choultry functions today as a home for elderly people. The Collector of Madras remains the chairman of the Choultry's Managing Committee.

Most of the changemakers featured in this issue are from Chennai. Each of them have been instrumental in bringing about social change. Let's celebrate their work!

—Marie Banu

## We all seed each other: The Value of Presence



**O**ur mind is like a piece of land planted with many different kinds of seeds: seeds of joy, peace, mindfulness, understanding, and love; seeds of craving, anger, fear, hate, and forgetfulness. These wholesome and unwholesome seeds are always there, sleeping in the soil of your mind. The quality of your life depends on the seeds you water. If you plant tomato seeds in your gardens, tomatoes will grow. Just so, if you water a seed of peace in your mind, peace will grow. When the seeds of happiness in you are watered, you will become happy. When the seed of anger in you is watered, you will become angry. The seeds that are watered frequently are those that will grow strong.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

In each one of us there is a teacher and a learner. We share and we also receive. When we live our life with this awareness, we will be attentive about our actions. In all relationships, seeding each other happens, either consciously or unconsciously. We seed each other through our thoughts, our actions and our views of life.

**How can we engage with life being present to this aspect "We all seed each other"?**

The seeding we do to each other shapes our lives and that of others too. A first step towards ushering in

Positive Energy is to be aware of it and how we experience it. And then stop "external" seeding, however, good the intention of the seed may be. The external process of seeding each other does not give us an inside view to life. Some of the seeds received from outside become beliefs, some pass of as thoughts and words. All of these start impacting our lives!

**An empowering way of going about engaging in a relationship and also seeding consciously is to seed an inquiry, a question that can lead to self-discovery!**

Therefore, it is important to be in relationships that nurture the seeds within us through self-inquiry and do not impose beliefs.

We know, in nature, the seed is in the plant itself. Likewise, our "seeds" are within us. When we move towards self-inquiry, we nourish the "seeds" within us.

A powerful way of living is to nurture these seeds through self-direction and compassion. Though we receive a number of seeds from the external environment, those that blossom and have fragrance are the ones within us. The external ones become restrictive and unexplainable as we continue possessing it unconsciously.

**One of the most effective ways of seeding is to offer one's Presence. For example: Sri Bhagavan (Ramana**

*Maharishi) was intensely active and yet so concealed was his activity that casual visitors and those who failed to perceive believed that he gave no upadesa at all or that he was indifferent to the needs of seekers.*

*When asked whether he gave initiation Sri Bhagavan always avoided a direct answer. But the initiation by look was a very real thing. Sri Bhagavan would turn to the devotee, his eyes fixed upon him with blazing intentness. The luminosity, the power of his eyes pierced into one, breaking down the thought-process. Sometimes it was as though an electric current was passing through one, sometimes a vast peace, a flood of light.*

The idea that Presence offers is to just Be. The Being then emerges and spreads its radiance. There is no lasting value in thinking, imposing one's thoughts on the other and advising, all of which amount to seeding from the outside. All of these go against Presence.

**Now is the time, begin seeding through Presence!**

"Whenever you meet anyone, no matter how briefly, do you acknowledge their being by giving them your full attention? Or do you reduce them to a means to an end, a mere function or role? A moment of attention is enough. You are no longer acting out a script, you become real." - Eckhart Tolle

### Yours Energetically

Ms. Bhuvaneshwari Ravi is trainer, facilitator and coach of the Positive Energy (PE) program. She is a spiritual seeker with a vision of transforming her own energy state from surviving to being. In this journey she has gathered deep insights and is 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, she is working in the Organization Development and Leadership Development space. She can be contacted at [bhuvaneshwari@teamthink.co.in](mailto:bhuvaneshwari@teamthink.co.in) for arranging Positive Energy training and Coaching sessions.



# Educating through Arts

*CSIM made me understand the illogic of starting yet another NGO when I could do all my service activity through already existing NGOs with similar efforts, who are not able to sustain.*

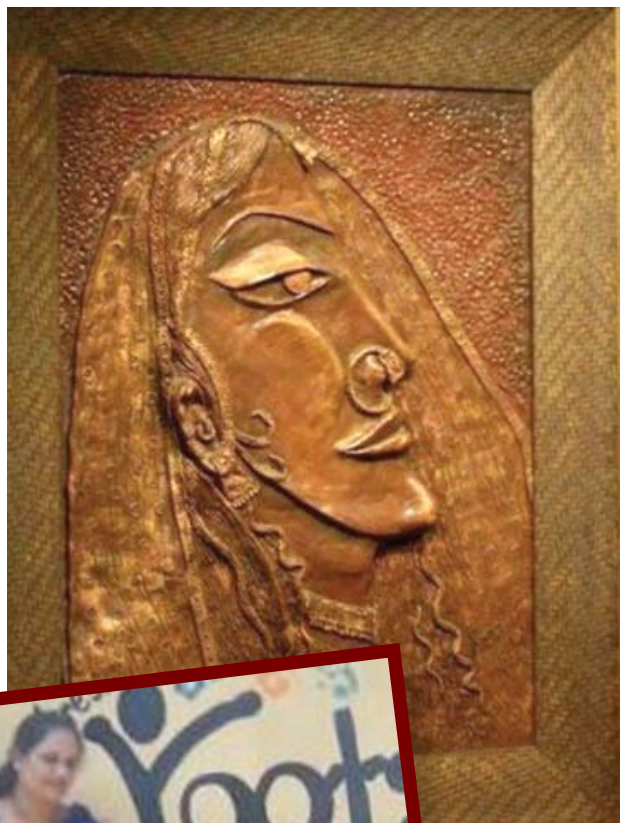
**A**cademic background has little to reveal about any person. And for those who think that happiness lies in pursuing all the little interests in life, shifting from one stream to another is not much of an impediment. So, from science to tourism management and then to fine arts was just the right trajectory for Ms Keerti Jaiswal, Director of Fresh Roots Montessori House for Children, as she feels that each of her experiences have moulded her to what she is today.

Based in Hyderabad, Keerti began her career by establishing the Sona Mela that manufactured 48 different kinds of kids and home accessories designed by her. She employed dropped-out girls with stitching skills to meet the demand in exhibitions. Over six years into this, Keerti had to give up this initiative due to health constraints.

Soon after, she joined the Gitanjali Devshala as an art/craft instructor promoting the use of arts and crafts in helping children in the age group of 5 to 15 years learn better. Evolving as a renowned art instructor, she went on to spend two decades in the field of education in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. Keerti has always believed that instigating educational activities at the right age is very critical. "She believes in education with a thorough learning and not exam oriented. Age appropriate education is a luxury to many. Any chances at this affects the overall development of children," says Keerti who took over the Fresh Roots Montessori House in Hyderabad to promote a new and innovative practice learning experience.

Her continuous engagement with children allowed her to create space for the integration of special children with others. "Children, no matter what their constraints are, would want to play with other children. They long for it. This is their favourite and the most efficient system of socialisation. Even parents cannot ensure this these days and therefore the need for external people like us to enable this process," says Keerti.

Simple games and small gifts, as she shares from her experiences, can go a long way in integrating special children with



other children. Such programmes eventually became an integral part of the school's activities. Special children from orphanages coming in are a regular feature. Keerti left no stone unturned in helping these children explore their talents. Painting classes, workshops on mural paintings and many other initiatives not only helped children but also allowed Keerti to further understand children's needs and development.

More and more programmes, exhibitions of art work, cultural events by children and workshops for children happened and Keerti became a meticulous planner in the process. She developed a wide network of individuals and organisations that helped her explore multiple approaches used to teach children and the possible ways of integrating arts as part of the regular curriculum, as she firmly believed that arts can enhance the learning process. On this path of success, she became a member of many organisations like The Leo Club, The Round Table, The Secunderabad Club, The Ladies Circle, FICCI and IIID too. She was also nominated for leadership positions within these organisations.

Keerti was keen in introducing computer

literacy in schools. "A generation cannot be left to update itself eventually. Ensuring that children are abreast of new developments is an essential part of integrated learning," she says.

She as chair person of SMLC 49 procured computers for Zilla parishad school in Neredmet, and helped children of labourers avail computer education. Through all her efforts Keerti wanted to make sure that children in small, dysfunctional schools should be provided with equal facilities and opportunities as children in other schools. She played a key role in the adoption and renovation of two Zila Parishad schools in Neredmet and Peddarevally, by arranging for different lab facilities, toilet blocks for girls and boys, library with adequate books and maps, classroom furniture and frequent sports events to promote their talents.

With such intense experience, Keerti looked forward to start something on her own. "I probably imagined an organisation that would help me do all this on a sustainable basis," she quips. In 2010, Keerti came across the advertisement on CSIM programmes in a newspaper. "The Social Entrepreneurship Outlook Programme at CSIM was more than an eye opener. There are so many NGOs and anybody would want to do something on their own. But, the real challenge comes in when you want to sustain the work and impact. CSIM gave me more confidence. It also helped me reassess my decisions rationally. I realised that I can also associate myself with others who do similar work than spend energy in re-establishing a similar effort," she shares.

"CSIM made me understand the illogic of starting yet another NGO when I could do all my service activity through already existing NGOs with similar efforts, who are not able to sustain," she adds

Being an Artist, her root idea was to give every child an art experience which can always be their "zone of de-stressing" from their different work areas. She has authored a set of 10 books on art n craft for school children called Hues n Designs Series, that are being used all over India in A grade schools.

She was also selected for the prestigious Goldman Sachs Certificate Programme for 10,000 Women Entrepreneurs of the world.

At present she continues on her self motivated journey conducting mural workshops for special needs children, Art Experience with various art medium to anyone n everyone who wants to learn art.

Art can do what text books cannot. So her dream project "Fresh Roots Montessori" celebrates every occasion with activity involving art n craft," Keerti asserts.

She was awarded citations n merit certificates for a Dedicated Art Teacher by

1. Lions club of Hyderabad Cosmo, 2. Schoolsindia Hope Foundation, 3. Lalithkala Center for Visual art, Rotary club of Jubilee hills, Gitanjali Devshala school.

Was also nominated for "Star of Asia" award in Preschool category. By International Business Council n

Vidya Vibhushan award Foundation for Accelerated Community Empowerment, New Delhi

—Shanmuga Priya.T



# Walking beyond token activism

*Stemming from Oxfam's 'Make Trade Fair' campaign, the 'Climate Justice' campaign catapulted Pushpanath into the realm of climate change activism.*

With his long, unruly greying hair Bangalore-based activist Pushpanath Krishnamurthy has no trouble grabbing eyeballs. And for over twenty years he has been finding newer ways to channelise that attention towards the issues he is passionate about: overcoming poverty, climate change, and fair trade as linked to poverty.

## Step-up for Climate Change

A Gandhian by principles, Pushpanath's walks for climate change have captured the imagination of people across the globe. His use of walking as a means to raise awareness on climate change began in the bitter winter of 2009.

**"Gandhi's Dandi march was a huge inspiration for my decision to walk."**

Pushpanath, affectionally known as 'Push', walked from Oxford to Copenhagen—that year's venue for the Conference of Parties, climate summit—making international headlines.

"Gandhi's Dandi march was a huge inspiration for my decision to walk. It was the same distance—550 kilometres—and the idea of walking for climate change appealed to me," he explains. The point was to reach Copenhagen with the smallest carbon footprint. "I also chose to walk because it is something anyone can do and was happy to learn that people around the world were walking (in their own neighbourhoods) with me," he adds. Pushpanath says he took no money with him on the journey and experienced several acts of kindness from the people he met en route.

Today, in his work with the Centre for Social Markets, he draws deeply from the many years he spent working with people affected by poverty, their stories of survival and his own tryst with poverty in childhood.

## The Oxfam Angle

His long experience, as one of UK-based Oxfam's global campaigner, has helped Pushpanath discern the undercurrents that tie poverty, fair trade and climate change together.

*"Without any insurance the poor lose what took them nearly a decade to accumulate whenever disaster strikes."*

"Poverty takes generations to overcome and almost always the poor (especially women) lack a voice," says Pushpanath. It's now more difficult than ever to overcome poverty with millions



Push with Amitabh Bachchan during his visit to Oxfam.



Push leading the Karnataka Growers Federation (KGF) people on a march.

of people around the world still struggling to access basic necessities, leave alone education. In his experience that spans three continents the erstwhile bank employee has witnessed how the poor get further impoverished every time there is a natural disaster. "Without any insurance

the poor lose what took them nearly a decade to accumulate whenever disaster strikes."

Compounding their situation is the lack of fair trade, according to Pushpanath. "Fair trade unlike free trade promotes sustainable growth and brings to the

forefront the small-scale farmer," he explains. To sum up, an already poor farmer striving to find a foothold in free trade driven markets gets dealt the hardest blow when a natural disaster occurs. And that cements his poverty for generations to come.

Pushpanath has spent multiple years working closely with impoverished communities in places like Southern Africa (Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa), India, Vietnam and Bosnia to name a few. "I was involved with popular mobilization against issues like double standards in trade and rigged rules that were affecting small agriculturists," recalls Pushpanath.

Stemming from Oxfam's 'Make Trade Fair' campaign, the 'Climate Justice' campaign catapulted Pushpanath into the realm of climate change activism.

Since then he has taken part in several climate hearings held across the world. "At every place my interactions with the affected communities provided me with the intense real life stories I used to propagate the message," says Pushpanath. These stories have helped him show, rather than simply tell, audiences that climate change was making serious impact on human lives across the world.



### Coffee Walk

All the interest and attention that his first walk for climate change generated gave him the impetus to champion the cause of coffee growers in Karnataka. “Between 2001 and 2006, I worked with several small time farmers who were growing coffee, the most traded commodity in the world after oil,” he recalls. The growers were at the mercy of vagaries dictated by free trade and through Oxfam Trade Campaign, Pushpanath, along with many other actors, was able to bring the stakeholders in the coffee trade in Karnataka to global stakeholder discussions for an agreement on pricing.

“Some of the biggest names in the coffee industry came together after we put together 20 million signatures and mobilised a petition from 4 million coffee growers,” says Pushpanath. The outcome was a favorable stabilization of coffee prices.

But in 2011, when he revisited the coffee growers in Karnataka, he realised that it was climate change that was wreaking havoc in their lives now. “Coffee is a very sensitive crop and the farmers were facing higher wind speeds and increasingly unpredictable rain patterns that were ruining the crop,” he explains. This led to his decision to set out on his second walk for climate change—this time from Baba Budan Giri in Chikmagalur to Mysore.

“My walk happened parallel to that year’s climate summit held in Durban,” he says adding that in the 15 days it took him to complete his journey, he met close to 30,000 people. During the course of his journey, Pushpanath says he was pleasantly surprised to see that local farmers were experimenting with methods of organic cultivation, soil and water conservation, and co-existing with animals.

His second walk resulted in a report titled ‘Coffee to Go?’ funded by stakeholders from both the government and the private sector. “The goal was to come up with plans for climate adaptation in coffee cultivation and an improved supply chain management that would minimise risks,” he says.

Having been an activist for over two decades now, Pushpanath has the vantage of seeing how much social media has



Push on his walk for climate change

transformed the way causes are championed today. “Most of the people I work with are not part of the social network and direct contact is still a huge part of the process,” he says. However, he realises that social media has heightened the clamour for attention because of the immense potential it packs. He also feels that social networks have made it possible for people to go beyond token gestures.

### The extra mile

“Today social media raises awareness about issues, collects funds and recruits champions,” he says. Noting that everyday there are newer methods being developed to raise awareness and get involved, he says open platforms like Brigge can help people be innovative. “People using such apps can connect with

others who have vowed to only cycle to work or with those who take a pledge to buy only fair trade products,” he says.

Agreeing that social media has the power to mobilise youngsters like nothing before, he says that if enough people buy fair trade products, the prices that seem steep now would eventually go down; and that governments will also begin patronising fair trade products. “Gradually, the environment will begin to thrive once again thanks to the sustainable methods used in the making of fair trade products,” he opines.

At the moment, Pushpanath is involved with setting up a Fair Trade City in India, the first of its kind in the country. “Through this venture we hope to promote sincere stories of sustainable growth, which in turn favourably affect climate.”

### What You Can Do

Talking about those who contest the idea of climate change, Push says that there are three types of such people: the skeptical, the cynical and the indifferent. While he knows he cannot change the minds of those who are cynical, he feels more hopeful about proving to the skeptics that climate change does exist and it hurts the most vulnerable who have not caused it. “All we need to do is show them scientific proof that climate change is real and that it is happening now.” For those who are indifferent, he wants them to interact with the things they feel indifferent about.

“Working with children is the way forward. But preaching to them will only alienate them. Sharing stories, on the other hand, can help them see the consequences of our actions. They must make their own choices.”

So, who are you? Have you always felt disconnected with the whole climate change dialogue? Then, you could join Pushpanath in November, 2015 on his next walk for climate change. “It could become a movement of its own if everyone in each of our friends list were to walk in their own neighbourhoods. We could count the total number of steps we took towards change or sum up the collective distance we walked!” he says sounding excited.

Winding up, he says India has an enviable population of youth and a large chunk of that population is still in its formative years. “Working with children is the way forward. But preaching to them will only alienate them. Sharing stories, on the other hand, can help them see the consequences of our actions. They must make their own choices,” he emphasizes. Youngsters, according to him, can become potent ambassadors of positive change.

### Profile

Pushpanath Krishnamurthy is presently Director, Programme and Advocacy, Centre for Social Markets. He continues to keep alive his connection with Oxfam and is a trainer and motivational speaker. Follow his work at his website [www.gopushgo.com](http://www.gopushgo.com) and his Facebook page, Pushpanath Empowerment Consultancy.

—Aruna V Iyer  
[www.brigge.co](http://www.brigge.co)

## Editorial

Latha Suresh  
Marie Banu

## CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INITIATIVE AND MANAGEMENT

**C**entre 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.

### Contact Persons:

Ms. Marie Banu, Director,  
Chennai @ 9884700029  
Dr. Madhuri. R, Head,  
Coimbatore @ 9840222559  
Mr. K L Srivastava, Director,  
Hyderabad @ 9912656112  
Ms Aruna Subramaniam,  
Director, Bangalore @  
9886833665.

**Please visit: [www.csim.in](http://www.csim.in). 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](http://www.san-india.org).





# Change is in the Chennai air

*Madras Day is an occasion that marks the formal founding of erstwhile Madras back in 1639, when the English East India Company built Fort St George on a small parcel of land and gradually developed little towns around it.*

Chennai-based publisher, Vincent D'Souza, likes to call himself one of the “catalysts” of Madras Day. He is after all, one of the brains behind the initiative from when it began in 2004. A true-blue Chennaiite, he's also seen the city change in all aspects — from the sleepy little seashores of Mylapore, to the bustling metropolis that Chennai is, today. This year, like all years, Vincent and a few like-minded Chennaiites will ring in Madras Day celebrations. But by his own admission, there's nothing special about Madras Day, this year. “It's all about youngsters getting out there and doing their bit to commemorate the city's big day,” he says, “It's all about building an eco-system. There's no method to it all. Madras Day is about the youth of the city doing what they can for the city, like they have been doing year after year.”

Vincent's nonchalance notwithstanding, Madras Week this year, is replete with fun activities that have come to become part and parcel of the annual celebrations. From walks and talks, to exhibitions and tours, the week has it all. In fact, the celebrations this year promises to remain as informative as ever with talks on communities like the early Armenian settlers, food trails on Mint Street, Chennai and its undying love for cricket and photo-walks by the dozen. But this mishmash of lifestyle, history and heritage is honed onto one objective — the need to provide Chennai's youth with a platform to get more active. “More youngsters in the city need to get out there and engage in healthy activism for their city,” he says. No talk about Chennai can end without discussing heritage, and Vincent is himself, a self-proclaimed lover of Chennai's old-world charm. Is there enough being done to conserve the city's heritage buildings? “The situation is better today, than it was before,” he replies. Is there more that can be done? He agrees. The need to keep preserving the city's heritage is evidently a big part of any commemorative event surrounding the city and its history.

Speaking of history, Madras Day is perhaps one of the oldest commemorative events that pays tribute to the spirit of Chennai. As Vincent's website, themadrasday.in says, “a city deserves to celebrate its birthday... and Chennai certainly

deserves it”. Madras Day is an occasion that marks the formal founding of erstwhile Madras back in 1639, when the English East India Company built Fort St George on a small parcel of land and gradually developed little towns around it. The integration of these hamlets around the fort, became known as the city of Madras. The concept of a celebration however was ideated only as late as 2004, when Vincent was joined by historian S Muthiah and senior journalist Sashi Nair. Gradually, the celebrations became bigger and the concept of Madras Week was thus born. This year, Madras Week will be commemorated between August 16 and August 23, while Madras Day continues to remain August 22, year after next.

Madras Day celebrations this year, will be supported by a host of home-grown businesses in Chennai. These include establishments like Amethyst, Alliance Francais of Madras, Chamiers Cafe, Madras University and Queen Mary's College. Added to this list, are establishments that have adopted the city as their home, like ITC Grand Chola, The Park hotel, and Hyatt Regency. All in the attempt to make Chennai sit and take note of its glorious past, even as it makes a push to what Vincent calls a more “activised city”. He adds: “It's the youngsters who will have to come out and make that change and become more active. Chennai's youth have to take greater part in the civics, politics and policies of this city.” Could social media become a catalyst towards achieving that? “It could but it's not the only tool towards achieving this,” Vincent says, “I get the feeling that social media quickly turns into a medium where a lot of us crib about the state of affairs around us, instead of going out there and making a difference. I want Chennai's youngsters to get their hands dirty even as they strive to bring about this change. You need to be pro-active and political.”

Any talk about a city in the process of change can only lead to the most visible aspect of changing Chennai, and that's the image of the city itself. When Chennai's image is discussed, one can't help but refer to the metro rail as perhaps this city's most visible infrastructural landmark. Is Chennai on the fast-track to growth, transit-and-infrastructure-wise? Vincent agrees. “There is indeed a great improvement in the city's transit and connectivity.”



But he's quick to caution against over-estimating these changes. “You have to realize, however, that transit modes like the metro rail are merely showpiece projects. At the end of the day a lot of your success as a transit hub depends on the quality of your roads or how equipped your traffic management systems are. That certainly matters too.”

In a nutshell, Madras Day is all about remembering the old and welcoming the new. However, a host of events that in a sense, celebrate Madras, has

ensured that the city's rich heritage and culture won't be forgotten in a hurry. This, even as the city gears up usher in a new era of change — one that promises to allure and direct the people of this city into a brighter and more meaningful future.





# Maneuvering Cost

While identifying cost management as a vital ingredient to project management, maneuvering cost is essentially another section. With the limited resources available in social organizations, the costs have to be carefully balanced for optimum output. It is essential to have a deeper understanding of calculating costs to effectively maneuver and manage them.

Ability to estimate cost of each activity/ resource/ time for all related tasks is essential for effective usage of the finance available. To do the estimation with utmost care and precision, the primary task will be to obtain significant data on the human resources, scope, schedule, baselines, risks, environment factors, assets and processes that are being followed in the project.

With these inputs different estimation techniques can be used to determine costs. Some of the well know estimation methods are:

- **Expert Judgment** – this involves inputs from functional and subject matter experts on the cost and related dimensions.
- **Analogous Estimation** – this involves using similar past project cost to project current project estimate derived from the word: analogy.
- **Parametric Estimation** - this method uses the relationship between variables to calculate the cost or duration. This is a more accurate technique for estimation.
- **Bottom-Up Estimation** - In this methodology each task is broken down into smaller components and then, individual estimates are developed to determine what specifically is needed to meet the requirements of each of these smaller components of the work. The estimates for the smaller individual components are then aggregated to develop a larger estimate for the entire task as a whole.
- Some methods are specific to context like the **Vendor Bid Analysis** which is used when working with suppliers on uncertain activities. This analysis considers the assumptions the vendor worked with and does a sensitivity assessment on those assumptions.
- When quality- related efforts and deficiency corrections are to be costed, **quality costs** are calculated separately. The other related costs would be the **Project Management Software** which consists of applications to manage the entire project with all related knowledge areas.

Determination of project budget is critical to efficient cost maneuvering. Some of the methods used to determine project budgets are

- **Reserve Analysis** - a technique used to determine a project budget. A project is analyzed from a cost over-run point of view and buffers are placed in appropriate places also known as Contingency and Management Reserves.
- **Cost Aggregation** which is the accumulation of single costs following the structure of the WBS (and the distribution of payments with respect to the schedule base line)
- **Expert Judgment** approach for soliciting informed opinions from individuals with particular expertise. This approach is used to obtain a rapid assessment of the state of knowledge about a particular aspect of change.
- **Historical Relationships** is used if there are similar projects that were done in the past, where that information is used to develop a parametric or analogous estimate.

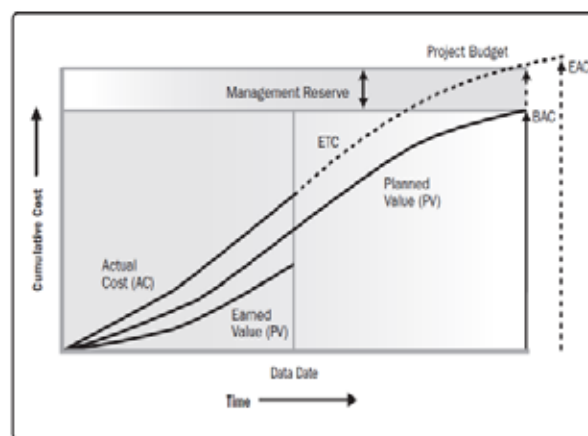
- **Funding Limit Reconciliation** which is the act of comparing and adjusting the funding limits and the estimated costs by refining the scope, rescheduling the activities and so on.

The advantage of estimating properly and using appropriate technique will take all the required aspects into consideration and not miss out critical values for appropriate decision making. This will help in better management and maneuvering of costs.

The next critical task after budget and estimation is to monitor and control costs. We need to monitor Work Performance Information, Cost Forecasts, Change Requests, and Project Management Plan Updates. The most commonly used methods of monitoring costs include –

- **Earned Value Management** - Earned value management answers the question “where are we now in relationship to the budget?” The formula is
- Cost Variance (CV) = Earned Value (EV) – Actual Costs (AC) or
- Cost Performance Index (CPI) = Earned Value (EV) / Actual Costs (AC)
- A positive CV (CPI > 1) is good and a negative CV (CPI < 1) is considered as bad.

A sample working on understanding the Earned Value Management is given below.



Activity	Budgeted Man hours	% Complete	Actual Man hours	Earned Value
A	120	75	103	90
B	200	80	190	160
C	100	50	60	50
D	300	90	260	270
Sum	720		613	570
CPI= Earned Value/Actual Value = 570/613 = .93				
EAC = BAC/CPI = 720/.93 = 774.32				
Overall % Complete = (EV/PV)* 100 = (570/720)x100 = 79.17				

## Budget at Completion (BAC) (Related to PV)

Authorized budget amount of the total project, i.e. what the project was supposed to cost

**Estimate at Completion (EAC)** Estimated cost of the project at completion, i.e., what the project is now expected to cost

## Variance at Completion (VAC)

BAC – EAC: The difference between what the project was supposed to cost (BAC) and what is now expected to cost (EAC).

## Estimate to Complete (ETC)



EAC – AC: How much more it is estimated it will cost to complete the project, i.e., the difference between what the total project is now expected to cost (EAC) and how much it has cost until now (AC).

- **Forecasting** - Forecasting answers the question “given where we are now (which was determined with the tool and technique of Earned value management), where will we be by the end of the project in relationship to the budget?” To do forecasting, you need to know the Budget at Completion (BAC), the Estimate at Completion (EAC), the Estimate to Complete (ETC), and the Variance at Completion or (VAC).
- **Performance Index** - answers the question “given where we are now, how fast do we have to go to be within budget by the end of the project?”
- **Performance Reviews** - measures the performance of the project compared to the cost baseline (that is the budget).

At times group decision-making techniques are used to discuss projects and cost. There are three types of group decision making - Nominal, Delphi technique and Brainstorming. In Brainstorming method which is most popular, groups of individuals relevant to project are brought together to discuss verbally. In the nominal group technique, members present view points and solutions are ranked. Delphi technique is a method of systematic forecasting using experts.

For example – If government school development project has to be undertaken, using the brainstorming method all the project components connecting to costs are identified. Using the analogous or parametric method cost estimation exercise is undertaken. The budget is determined through cost aggregation. Historical relationships in the same district or other districts are checked. Based on the WBS the required number and caliber of people are identified. The earned value management is calculated; performance index and performance reviews are undertaken periodically. The earlier discussed PERT (Program evaluation review technique) where the best case, worst case and most likely case are considered and calculated appropriately.

Most often in social organizations there is a myth that creativity, field work and finance don't go together. But an efficient Project Manager/ Leader has to break this popular belief and move towards a holistic perspective and learn to maneuver costs efficiently.

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath and Prathaap B



# Ostracisation due to different interests?

Sometimes one feels that the word minority is used most often with reference to religion and caste in India. Due to this perception, many groups who actually fit the definition of 'minority', and that deserve special care & protection are left out. Transgenders and gay men are high on this list. Their vulnerability and stigma in society has not even allowed them to assert their identity upfront. This proves to be a significant obstacle to their health, psychosocial well-being, and to their obtaining legal protections in society.

To address these challenges, Sahodaran was established as a Community Based Organisation (CBO) working for MSM (Men having Sex with Men) since 1998. Ms Jaya, Sahodaran's General Manager, begins by first explaining the difference between an NGO and a Community Based Organisation. "In an NGO, anybody can work for the beneficiary group while in the latter, the beneficiary group is equipped with capacities to facilitate their own development. They become the decision makers and actual actors in the field."

Founded by a renowned LGBT activist - Mr Sunil Menon, based on the findings of a study led by him in 1992, Sahodaran is the first and largest Community Based Organization (CBO) run by and for the MSM community in South India. Given the challenging life they are forced to live, MSM often lack the self-respect and confidence to pursue their personal interests. "When sexual orientation is what defines you, the actual person is hardly ever seen. His or her capacities, talents and other strengths do not come to light. People are not willing to even associate themselves with us. We are ostracised," laments Jaya who is disappointed by the Supreme Court's decision to uphold IPC 377.

At its core, Sahodaran addresses the sexual and psychosocial health of the MSM community, offering a complete package of HIV/AIDS prevention and care services. Through their network of outreach workers and counselors, Sahodaran educates MSM about safer sex, condom use, HIV/AIDS prevention, and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), as well as counseling to help people address the larger family, workplace and legal crises in their lives. Jaya asserts immediately that HIV does not spread because of gay men. "It is a myth." Rather, because of isolation, shame and stigma, MSM community members struggle to assert their own needs for healthcare. "They think they are ridiculed because they are not normal. They take it upon themselves. And continuous abuse traumatises them, leaving them with very low self-esteem," says Jaya. Sahodaran's outreach programmes intend to bring about a behavioural change in the MSM so that they can lead normal healthy lives in



their own ways. Jaya herself has benefitted from Sahodaran's programmes. "I understood the importance of regular testing for STI/STDs. It was explained that STIs increased the chances of acquiring HIV/AIDS by more than 10 times. Awareness has changed my life completely. And that is what I try to do other community members through Sahodaran," she adds.

In addition to empowering community members through sexual health services, counseling, and income generation, Sahodaran helps form supportive spaces for MSM, both within and outside the community. One of the key services provided by Sahodaran is the vibrant Drop-In Centre, intended to provide space for the community members to meet and socialise on a regular basis without any fear of being ridiculed, harassed or beaten up. Developing a vibrant Drop-In Centre was an exercise in trust building, as it required the community members to openly admit their identities. Papers, books, novels, video entertainment, indoor games and other provisions are made available for the members to collectively engage with one another and find psychosocial support. As Sahodaran's network grew, they recognized the growing need for skill training to ensure basic livelihood options. Sahodaran runs various income generation training programmes in candle making, calendar making, pottery, tailoring, mobile pouches, etc. for community members to make and sell their products.

Counseling services are indispensable for this community. "When we refer to gay men, we must understand that there are two types. First, there are normal men who are interested in other men. Second, there are men that begin to realise feminine characteristics in themselves. They are the ones who are more likely to become transgenders. Families do not realise the extent of impact the hormonal changes can have

on these persons. Sometimes, these men are forced to marry women. Transition from homosexual to heterosexual life is not easy for us. Unable to handle this pressure, many also attempt suicide," explains Jaya, who herself was a beneficiary of Sahodaran's programmes in the '90s.

Sahodaran provides holistic support for its beneficiaries, recognizing that sexual health is only one aspect of people's lives. Community members are vulnerable to continual harassment by families, police, and the general public. Because of punitive laws like Section 377 it is difficult for them to access the legal and medical support they need. Sahodaran fills this gap by operating a crisis helpline, where a variety of crises are handled within 24 hours. In the case of health-related crises, Sahodaran outreach workers follow up also with the concerned members' partners, so that infections are diagnosed and treated at the earliest.

Jaya and her team realize that these crisis interventions, critical as they are, are immediate fixes. Their long-term goal is to create a world where atrocities against sexual minorities are eliminated, and where such crises do not occur in the first place. To do its part towards forging this social change, Sahodaran conducts outreach and advocacy programmes to educate the larger public on LGBT rights. 'Public', in their sense, includes a long chain of stakeholders ranging from doctors, paramedics and paralegal workers, to teachers and students, to land brokers refusing to give houses on rent for MSM. In addition, Sahodaran advocates through television and print media, promoting positive coverage of the community. "Without such advocacy our crisis intervention efforts are meaningless," she adds. A doctor's stigma could prevent a gay man from accessing health care," she warns. To promote the visibility of the community, and enable members to showcase their

talents, Sahodaran organises annual beauty pageants through which participants have received opportunities in the film industry and fashion shows.

Sahodaran's successful track record is demonstrated by its long list of awards and honors. Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society (TNSACS) honored Sahodaran in 2010 by awarding them a new project in North Chennai: Sahodaran Unit II. "We always get an A+ grade from TNSACS," says Jaya proudly. "Recognizing our success in Central and South Chennai, TNSACS exhorted us to empower and mobilize MSM and TGs in impoverished areas of North Chennai. We were also asked to conduct counselors orientation and experience sharing for other NGOs implementing interventions for MSM." Recently, in 2014, Sahodaran was awarded the "Best Grassroots Level Award" from the Family Planning Association of India. They received a Solidarity award from the South India AIDS Action Programme for our work with the "Pehchan" project for MSM in 2011. They received National AIDS Control Organization's Red Ribbon Express Cultural Troupe Award in 2010 for our dance and theatre-based advocacy. And in 2006, they were recipients of "Best Civil Society Award" from UNAIDS in 2006. And this is only a small selection from the awards they have received!

Community ownership, Jaya says, is the backbone and foundation of Sahodaran's success. "The mark of a successful CBO is that it is able to create a non-judgmental atmosphere for community members. Since the Sahodaran Drop-In Centre is peopled and led entirely by MSM, we offer just such a space. If it was headed by a non-community member, the dynamic would be different." Many MSM that began their careers at Sahodaran have become leaders in their own right, founding and running CBOs of their own. The vision and guidance provided by Sahodaran's Founder-Director and Board has also been crucial. However, she continues, there is still a long way to go. The re-criminalization of non-heterosexual relationships by the Supreme Court in 2013 was a huge setback for the community. "Thanks to the continuing hostile social and legal climate, only few of us have the confidence to openly admit our identity. There are very few self-identifying gay men such as our Founder Director. Following the 2013 judgment, even the few people active on social media have gone into hiding."

Sahodaran's team is now looking for new opportunities to continue connecting community members to broader sets of options by reaching out to the public. Readers interested to know more about Sahodaran can visit [www.sahodaran.org](http://www.sahodaran.org).

—Shanmuga Priya.T



# Respectful final rites for unknown

*Sreedhar and his volunteers fight against several odds in disposing of the dead in a decent manner and in keeping with customary rituals.*

It is widely believed that a call to social service must have its trigger in deep observation, an odd experience or the influence of a mentor. Often, social service needs to be delivered at odd, out-of-the-way places most people never visit, to critically downtrodden people most people never think of, and under circumstances that may not usually be experienced by most people. Hence a powerful trigger is needed to motivate one to do unimaginable services to the uncared for.

S. SREEDHAR (58), a routine man of the world saw the trigger in an extraordinary book. The Senior Pontiff of the Kanchi Mutt – Shri Chandrasekara Saraswathy or Maha Periyava as he is revered by many, exhorting dharmic living, makes a passionate appeal in Vol.3 of Dheivathin Kural to give a fitting funeral to the orphan who dies “unsung, unwept and unhonoured”. When he read those lines of the Paramacharya something changed in Sreedhar permanently. As a result, many have benefitted from his extraordinary social service. Yes, Sreedhar benefits not the living, who may one day come to know of his help and probably record gratitude in return, but the dead who can never know who did what through the senses. And the theatre of action is the mortuary or the ghat.

One sometimes reads about unidentified bodies resulting from causes such as accidents or wanton efforts at self-destruction, “though the ever-lasting has fixed his canons against self-slaughter”. And there are deaths occurring in destitute homes where it is not possible to trace any relatives of the dead to conduct the last rites. In the case of accidents, any dead bodies that remain unidentified after police investigation are preserved in mortuaries. Sometimes, bodies are brought to the morgue in highly decomposed state, sending stink to the high heavens. It is here that Sreedhar steps in, obeying the mandate of the Paramacharya. He takes all calls, from morgue assistants, Police Officials, Railway authorities and from any passerby, at all hours. From here Sreedhar takes over and the dead, from now on, suffer no wrongs.

## Early days at Chennai:

Sreedhar was born and brought up in a village near Tindivanam, not far from Chennai. He came to Chennai for higher studies and to build a career. He and his cousin lived under the benign care of Kavi Yogi Maharishi Shudhananda Bharathi at Adyar. The urge to work for some good cause continued to burn in him. He read many religious works and the preaching of sages and scholars, which kindled his interest further. But *Dheivathin Kural*



remains the most influential. Philosophically speaking, all humans are children of God, and no one brings along personal belongings at birth or takes them away at death! In a sense, all humans are orphans at all times, except for their transitory time on earth as humans! Sreedhar decided that he would work on arranging the burial of unclaimed bodies and the bodies of destitute, who breathed their last in homes run by NGOs. He first reached out to Vishranti, an organization for the elderly and the aged destitute, run by Smt. Savitri Vaithi. According to Sreedhar “the idea is to arrange funerals with basic rituals. Set aside caste, religion, etc. The departing soul deserves that last respects to be paid to the mortal remains. Instead of dumping bodies in a pit or consigning them to fire, an appropriate burial with prayers is what I intend to give them”.

Sreedhar decided on making this his mission with the support of Vishranti in the initial years. As soon as he heard about a death, he would seek permission to take leave from work his regular work place and perform the final rites, and then return to work.

## Setting up a Trust:

After a few years, he started the ‘Anatha Pretha Kainkary Trust’ (APKT). He felt that if he were to extend his services further, he needed to have a more formal approach, especially since handling unclaimed bodies required support. A few other people from different walks of life joined him in his service. To enable him to proceed further with his plans, he then tied up with well-known NGOs like SaiCharan, Aanandam, KakkumKarangal, Nimmadhi, Premalaya, and some homes for war

widows and for the mentally challenged. Some of these institutions were orphanages, and in such cases, the last rites were performed in a way consistent with the religion of the deceased.

The biggest challenge lay in burial of unclaimed bodies in mortuaries. They bury unclaimed dead bodies after lengthy police procedures and clearance. Sreedhar mostly gets call from hospitals at indefinite time spans, but indicating a specific time plan for disposal. The most likely days are Sundays.

## Teamwork:

He now has the support of volunteers supporting him from different walks of life, like a retired senior police official, young employees of IT companies and private firms. This author was touched when he had occasion to note that women too had become part of this service. This statement is not intended to reflect a gender bias, but none can discount the hold of unbroken social beliefs that does not approve of woman visiting burial ground. Modern liberal attitudes have resulted in gradual erosion of such beliefs. When questioned, one of the women volunteers said she was there as she was a young widow and derived emotional satisfaction from participating in this service. One must appreciate the courage and spirit behind this act of defying tradition and coming to fight human predicament even after cessation of life.

It is important to note that it is not an easy environment to provide service. Sreedhar and his volunteers fight against several odds in disposing of the dead in a decent manner and in keeping with customary rituals. Often, mortuaries impose severe limitations resulting from constrained resources. Legal and other delays often lead to severe decomposition of bodies. Staff may have work-related issues that may reflect adversely in their performance.

Sreedhar is considerate and appreciative of the staff and workers at mortuaries, crematoriums and burial grounds. The public does not comprehend the occupational hazards they face, and thus, people who visit these places—usually under some compulsion—do not cooperate with the staff all the way. Sometimes, when they do mass burials, earth excavators may not be available for some reason or the other. These are realities they have to put up with.

Sreedhar recalls that one cannot expect a warm reception from society when one works on activities like arranging funerals for unclaimed bodies. He strongly feels that all volunteers must be humble and willing to work through all odds. Sometimes, a simple down to earth



approach is required to resolve issues. He cited an example. One particular day during the monsoon, his team had carried a large number of bodies from a mortuary in a van. Typically, the schedule calls for all of them to assemble at the mortuary around 8 am, handle the formalities and leave in a van with the bodies received by 10 am. Once the burial ground is reached, Sreedhar is joined by his volunteers. The dead, where their faith is identifiable get a funeral according to the faith they practiced. In case of other burials, volunteer Odhuvars begin reciting the Siva Puranam with total devotion befitting the occasion for about an hour. Mr Arokiaraj a volunteer now gives a Christian prayer committing the soul to the Lord God. Then the corpses get lowered, with all outward purification done and dressed up and covered with shroud, into the pit. After the pit is covered with earth, the team of volunteers sings in chorus 'Ragu pathi Raghava Raja Ram' in a way the Mahatma wanted us to render it. Listening to Sreedhar, one would conclude that it is worth dying to deserve this kind of a finale. The funeral given stands in sharp contrast to several unemotional send-offs given by relatives, who perform, uninvolved, as though they are completing a painful duty. The team would typically complete the last rites by noon, when members would return to their respective homes.

On that particular day, they reached the mortuary at around 11 am. An excavator was required at the burial ground as there were 30 bodies. An excavator was arranged from elsewhere as the one regularly used in that ground failed. But the two staff members at the burial ground were running fever and could not do any work. Digging pits for corpses is not an activity that one can plan out in advance, especially during monsoon. At about 3 pm, they decided that they would have to dig the pit themselves, as it was not appropriate to keep the bodies out for long.

While they were digging, their van had to leave, and they worked at getting the bodies out. Sreedhar recalled that not only was his team handling the labor comfortably, but also the ground staff members, without heed to their illness, were helping in a spirited manner. Leaders need to demonstrate their skills by keeping workers together and Sreedhar excels in doing that.

It bears mentioning here that Sreedhar recently retired from the post of Vice President – Operations of a large, well-known financial services company. One of his friends informed this author that there were occasions when Sreedhar would take his coat off and leave the office, finish with the last rites of a corpse or more and come right back to work. Sreedhar demonstrates commitment to the cause and the desire to live by practicing what he believes! Over the last three decades Sreedhar has performed the last rites for 1430 persons with solemnity.

**Over the last three decades Sreedhar has performed the last rites for 1430 persons with solemnity.**

”

#### Funding:

Each cremation costs between Rs.1, 000 - 1,500. APKT manages these expenses from its funds. In the early stages, Sreedhar used his personal money on several occasions.

There was one touching experience he had while doing this. A woman who had an income of barely Rs.12 a day contributed one day's earning to him. She was a stranger, and he had not sought funds from her. She volunteered on hearing about his services from neighborhood sources. Sreedhar feels that funding would never be an issue for him in extending this service.

**Other Sevarthis (Service Providers)**  
Sreedhar mentioned to this author that many other people offer the same service as he does. A lady by name Neila, has been burying dead bodies from government hospital for a decade along with her two sons. Trivikrama Mahadeva in Bangalore has been doing this for more than four decades. A flower vendor in Coimbatore, Shanta Kumar, is reportedly doing the same thing, and so are Umar Ali and his friends at Udamalpet. Reports also state that the Chennai-based advocate Venkatasubramaniam's 'JeevatmaKaikaryam Trust' offers these services while Raghavan, a retired Chennai Telephones employee, offers his Chromepet Gayathri Trust's services depending upon need.

All such good work needs to be commended and supported. Some of the people involved in this kind of work have been recognized by governments and towering personalities. The point here is that Sreedhar is one among the few who

19th Century. The sage's father advised Sreedhar's grandfather to start a primary school in their native village. Paying heed to the advice the family set up a primary school which has rendered several decades of service and is going strong now, under a different management. As Sreedhar grew up, serving fellow humans became his desire, but he wanted to do so alongside providing for his family's needs by working. He did good and gainful employment, after trying years and went on to become a Vice President of a financial company. After the initial years of service, the demand on his time and energies began to increase and he started allotting more time mainly to his social activity and to a lesser extent to his family. His wife extends her unstinted support, and more surprisingly, encourages her children to join their father in his service. His elder son is an active member of his team. His younger son lives abroad, but participates whenever he comes to India. According to Sreedhar, it is critical to get family understanding and support for such activities; otherwise, nothing is possible.

#### Conclusion:

Sreedhar has more dreams, like assisting severe cancer patients, renovation of old temples. The Kanchi seer's writing influenced him to take up the odd service of burial arrangement with a sense of pride and the desire to pay due last respects to those who otherwise remain unclaimed. This kind of meaningful engagement can co-exist with the normal passions for building a career and sustaining a family, when one has an understanding spouse and supportive children. If more people like Sreedhar were to extend their hands, this world of the living would become a better place by giving peace to the dead!

— This is part of the book "Incredible Champions" authored by N.Chandrasekaran and published by Partridge Publishers 2014.

## Inspiring Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

### Two ladies and two gentlemen from Ceylon.

**D.:** Have you realised God? If so, in what shape?

**M.:** Who remains there to see God? The question might well be if one has known oneself.

**D.:** I have known myself.

**M.:** Is the 'I' different from the Self that you say you have known the Self?

**D.:** I know the Self as identical with the body. If the Self be different from the body let Bhagavan tell me how to see the Self separate from the body. He has realised God. He can teach me.

**M.:** Why should the Self be separated from the body? Let the body remain as it is.

**D.:** The soul when disembodied can see

through all bodies.

**M.:** Are there others then? Or is there even your own body? Consider your sleep - You do not know your body then. But still you are there all the same. Did you then perceive the world through this or other bodies? Nevertheless, you cannot deny your existence then. There must be a subject to see the world and the subject must also be limited. If unlimited how can there be others beside the unlimited Self?

**D.:** Does God have any limits?

**M.:** Leave God alone. What limits were there for your Self in your sleep?

**D.:** Death must then be the highest state.

**M.:** Yes. We are now living in Death.

Those who have limited the unlimited Self have committed suicide by putting on such limitations.

**D.:** Concentrate on the Self, you say. How to do it?

**M.:** If that is solved everything else is solved.

**D.:** Know thyself, you say. How to know the Self?

**M.:** You now know that you are the body.

**D.:** Raja yoga realises through the body, senses,

etc., and Sri Bhagavan advises realisation by thinking. This is jnana yoga.

**M.:** How can you think without the body?

**D.:** God does not think.

**M.:** Why then did you start asking, "In what shape did you see God?"

**D.:** God must be felt through the senses.

**M.:** Are you not feeling God?

**D.:** Is everybody feeling God always?

**M.:** Yes.

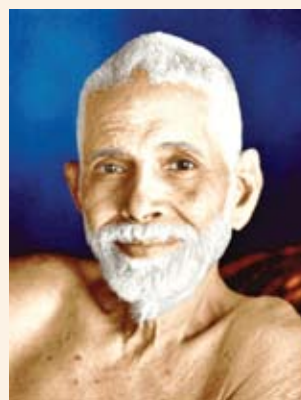
**D.:** Then what is realisation?

**M.:** Realisation is to get rid of the delusion that you have not realised.

**D.:** I don't catch the point.

They left, having taken a snapshot.

—Excerpted from talks with Shri Ramana Maharishi





**“More and more women are highly educated, well employed and pushing boundaries. Women have moved up in the socio-economic ladder.”**

**Geeta Ramaseshan shares with Marie Banu about social habits and social laws in India.**



**G**eeta Ramaseshan is a senior lawyer, practicing in the Madras High Court in the area of criminal law, constitutional law and family law, with specific emphasis on human rights and women's human rights. She has also specialized in international human rights law and has conducted workshops on international human rights for the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Bangkok and the International Women's Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific. She has been a consultant for UNICEF and UNDP on issues relating to child, women and the law. She is an adjunct faculty in Asian College of Journalism, where she teaches media law.

She has worked extensively in cases relating to discrimination, custodial violence, prisoners, juvenile children, sexual harassment, the rights of minorities, and the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS. She has been a Heinz Fellow from the University of Pittsburgh and an Eisenhower Fellow on

Human Rights, Public Interest litigation and Justice.

*In an exclusive interview, Geeta Ramaseshan shares with Marie Banu about social habits and social laws in India.*

**How can be lawyers be made more socially responsible?**

Being socially responsible would be a requisite for all not just lawyers and needs to be inculcated during the stage of primary education and by the family. But, one way of understanding the complexities of the socio-economic issues in the country could be when the educational curricula for legal studies, inculcates a sense of social responsibility so that young lawyers get inspired to also take up issues that address socio-economic change.

**Is there any particular aspect of learning that you feel is much needed in the Bachelors in Law Curriculum?**

Family law studied from a feminist perspective, criminal law from a constitutional and human rights perspective, property law from a socio-economic perspective especially on matters pertaining to land, the list could go on and on! But, primarily what would be of relevance is to consider the impact of law on people.

**How can we tackle the issue of child trafficking in India?**

Child trafficking has its roots in the socio-economic reality. Invariably, children who are trafficked come from marginalized communities. There would hardly be any cases of upper caste or upper class children who are trafficked. As there is a socio-economic component for this issue, it cannot be handled by criminal law alone which seeks to only punish the perpetrators (which is very important), but not transform the condition of the children. The law on juvenile justice seeks to address this issue, but lacks a sturdy support system.

**Your thoughts on Honor killing?**

As a society we do not believe in the right to choice of one's spouse or partner. The societal control is so

strong that when there is any deviation from the norm, there is killing of young people which is an extreme form of violence. There are other situations also such as forced marriages, forcing a woman to stay in a marriage however violent the situation is, or compelling a person to break away from a relationship or marriage.

There are no easy ways to deal with this situation except in a systemic manner. I can elaborate on two aspects while there are many more dimensions to the problem. One is that the law looks at it as killing and there is no usage of the word honour in the statute. This has been constructed by some judgments of courts. Criminal laws however cannot transform society but can only punish the perpetrator. After all, despite death penalty for serious offences the offences continue.

Basically, ours is a very discriminative society. We discriminate based on caste, class, religion, etc. When you have a scenario of this kind, there is a justification from within the larger community who don't see that the crime of killing a person for the sake of honour is wrong. Unless this attitude and approach of justification changes, unfortunately, these honour killings will continue.

The other problem is our refusal to understand and accept the sexuality of young people. Acceptance of this would help us deal with the problems of adolescent and young adults in a much more nuanced manner.

**What are your views on the reality of Gender Equality?**

Every situation cannot be taken by exception to the rule. Yes, more and more women are highly educated, well employed and pushing boundaries. Women have moved up in the socio-economic ladder.

But, the average situation for the majority women in India remains bleak. The economic divide is increasing which always impacts women more. There is increasing violence against women. While we have made some success in changing laws especially after the case of Nirbhaya, the impact of such legislations have to be seen.