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EDITOR: MARIE BANU

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Women's safety remains a pressing issue in India, underscoring the urgent need for a multi-pronged approach to address systemic challenges. While there has been progress in creating awareness and introducing legislative measures, the responsibility of ensuring women's safety cannot rest solely on individuals. Institutions—government, educational establishments, workplaces, and society at large—bear a significant responsibility to safeguard the rights and dignity of women.

India has witnessed numerous movements demanding justice and safety for women. However, the recurrence of violence against women highlights the gaps between policy and implementation. This disconnect calls for institutions to step up, not just in enforcing laws but also in fostering environments that prioritise respect and safety.

Educational institutions play a critical role in shaping societal attitudes. Schools and colleges must integrate gender sensitisation programs into their curricula, instilling values of equality and mutual respect from a young age. Anti-harassment cells and grievance redressal mechanisms should be active and approachable, encouraging students to report issues without fear of stigma.

Workplaces have a legal and moral obligation to protect women employees. The POSH Act, 2013, mandates the formation of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs). Regular training programs and an organisational culture of zero tolerance for harassment are essential to create safe working environments.

Technology also plays a significant role in women's safety. Apps that track locations, panic buttons in public transport, and digital platforms to report abuse can enhance safety measures. However, this must be accompanied by safeguards against cybercrime and online harassment, which disproportionately target women.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups have been instrumental in bridging gaps where institutional efforts falter. They provide legal aid, rehabilitation, and counseling to survivors while advocating for policy changes. Collaboration between the government and such organisations can amplify the impact of safety measures.

Ultimately, the responsibility of safeguarding women's rights lies not only with formal institutions but also with every individual. Changing deep-rooted patriarchal mindsets requires collective effort. Men must actively participate in discussions about gender equality, and families must challenge discriminatory practices.

India's vision for inclusive growth and social justice cannot be achieved without ensuring women's safety. Institutions must move beyond token measures and work toward creating a society where women can live with dignity, free from fear. Safeguarding women's rights is not just a legal obligation; it is a moral imperative that defines the character of a nation.

As we step into 2025, let us collectively resolve to make this year a safer, more just, and equitable space for all. Wishing everyone a Happy New Year filled with hope, progress, and harmony!

Marie Banu

EDITORIAL

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu Rodriguez

A SUSTAINABLE REVOLUTION

BAMBOO HOMES FOR A GREENER WORLD

I remember it was in 2009 when I began my journey in the sustainable construction industry. At the time, sustainability wasn't a priority — often limited to solar panels, LED lights, or just greenery. This concerned me because the construction industry contributes around 40 per cent of global emissions. With limited understanding within the industry and a preference for traditional building materials, meaningful sustainable progress seemed out of reach.

The construction industry is vital for urban growth, but at what cost? If we continue on this path, we will exploit more natural resources and generate more greenhouse gases, worsening climate change. This is not the betterment of life we aspire to.

We must do better. While policies and regulations help, real change must come from within. We need to prioritise sustainable practices by making informed material choices and reducing embodied carbon to lessen our environmental impact. Shifting from short-term profits to long-term sustainability is key to protecting our planet.

Thankfully, the industry's understanding of sustainability has begun to evolve. More developers are now exploring alternative building methods and embracing circular economy principles to minimise resource use and create a more sustainable future. Singapore is playing its part in charting the path towards that vision.

The first Green Building Masterplan for Singapore was launched by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) in 2006 before a new version was co-created in 2021 with the Singapore Green Building Council to encourage developers to embed sustainability into their projects and adapt their energy consumption behaviour. Together with the Singapore Green Plan 2030, the goal is to green 80 per cent of our buildings by 2030, transform new developments into Super Low Energy buildings, and significantly improve energy efficiency, creating a healthier built environment for all.

Today, Singapore's urban landscape reflects this shift. The first timber building was launched in 2017, and others soon followed. We now have timber structures such as the Singapore Sustainability Academy, SMU Connexion, Bukit Canberra, as well as Gaia @ NTU—the largest wooden building in Asia when it opened in 2023. These are hallmarks of Singapore's commitment to sustainability.

One project that is especially dear to me is the DBS Newton Green building. During the planning phase, bamboo was proposed for the project—an extraordinary material with immense value to construction and the environment, as highlighted in Our Better World's Bamboo House India story. I was delighted when my client embraced this innovative approach. I hope more clients will adopt sustainable practices like these, and I also hope to see more initiatives like Bamboo House India and others, like Indonesia's Green Bali school, emerging across Asia!

Though Singapore and India have distinct

building regulations, there are valuable lessons to be learnt from each other. By understanding the market dynamics and acceptance levels in both countries, we can identify opportunities for adaptation and innovation. While the specifics may differ, the overarching goal of creating sustainable, resilient urban environments is universal.

The potential impact of reimagining the construction industry is vast. If we prioritise sustainability, we can create a world where we focus on enhancing existing buildings rather than continually constructing new ones. This approach not only conserves resources but also fosters a deeper appreciation for our built environment.

Ultimately, I hope we can come together to take real actions that tackle climate change. It's

time to prioritise sustainability over economic gains. By embracing innovative practices and forging partnerships across borders, we can redefine the construction industry and pave the way for a healthier planet. The journey may be challenging, but the rewards—a liveable, sustainable future—are worth every effort.

About Bamboo House India

Bamboo House India is a social enterprise that promotes sustainable construction using bamboo, a fast-growing and renewable resource. Established in Hyderabad in 2006 by entrepreneurs Prashant and Aruna Lingam, the need for eco-friendly furniture for their home led to the birth of the enterprise.

One of the fastest-growing plants in the world, bamboo's rapid growth makes it an ideal alternative to traditional timber, helping to alleviate deforestation pressures. Bamboo also emits 35 per cent more oxygen and absorbs 40 per cent more carbon dioxide than trees, making it exceptionally valuable for combating climate change and improving air quality.

Bamboo House India designs and constructs eco-friendly structures that not only reduce carbon footprints but also support local communities by providing training and employment in bamboo craftsmanship, empowering local artisans and encouraging sustainable livelihoods. Their projects range from homes to community spaces, showcasing bamboo's strength, flexibility, and aesthetic appeal.

Through its multifaceted approach, Bamboo House India exemplifies how innovative building solutions can contribute to fighting climate change, while enriching local communities and making a positive impact on both the environment and society.

A story by Our Better World – the digital storytelling initiative of the Singapore International Foundation



BUILDING RESILIENT AND CREATIVE LEARNERS



Rahul Bora, the founder of Thoughts to Action, is on a mission to revolutionise education in low-income schools by integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) and arts education. Through his initiative, Rahul aims to create a holistic learning environment that nurtures emotional intelligence and creativity alongside academics. Here's how Rahul's personal journey and passion led to the birth of Thoughts to Action.

"I saw firsthand the lack of focus on social-emotional learning and creative development in low-income schools. It was clear that there was a need for a platform to integrate these aspects into education," he says.

While studying social work, he discovered his passion for teaching and the arts through voluntary work with an education NGO in Northeast India. Recognising the transformative power of SEL and the arts, Rahul founded Thoughts to Action in 2020 to address these gaps and foster holistic education. "The inspiration for Thoughts to Action came during my time at Bosco Institute," he shares.

Starting an initiative like Thoughts to Action was no easy feat. Rahul recounts the initial challenges he faced in gaining trust and acceptance from schools and communities. "Many were sceptical about integrating arts and SEL into their traditional curriculums," he explains. To tackle this, Rahul collaborated closely with teachers and conducted free workshops to showcase the benefits of SEL. "Building relationships through consistent engagement was key to

overcoming this hurdle," he says.

Resource constraints also posed significant challenges. "We focused on low-cost, high-impact activities and sought external support to make things work," he adds, emphasising the importance of creativity and adaptability in overcoming obstacles.

Rahul's vision for Thoughts to Action is deeply rooted in his personal experiences. Reflecting on a pivotal moment in his life, he shares, "Losing my father during my 10th standard changed everything. I had to take on familial responsibilities and give up my dream of pursuing formal art education."

However, his passion for the arts never faded. "During my postgraduate studies, I found a way to channel my creativity and emotions into understanding and empathising with others' struggles," he says. His voluntary work in Northeast India exposed him to the challenges faced by underprivileged students in government schools, solidifying his resolve to make a difference.

Through SEL and arts education, he aims to empower students to envision and pursue a brighter future. For Rahul, being a social entrepreneur goes beyond profit-driven motives. "My goal is to break the cycle of limitations imposed by socio-economic factors. It's about creating meaningful change while ensuring sustainability," he says.

Rahul believes that social entrepreneurship is distinct from traditional entrepreneurial roles because of its focus on societal impact. "Empowering

children and communities through education is at the heart of what I do. It's about building systems that address social inequities in the long term," he adds.

At its core, Thoughts to Action focuses on programs that integrate SEL with arts education. Rahul outlines the key initiatives offered by the organisation

"Our programs are designed to nurture emotional intelligence and creativity while addressing academic needs," Rahul says. He sheds light on the core focus areas of his organisation, its impact on students and communities, and the leadership philosophy that drives this youth-led initiative. "Interactive SEL workshops promote emotional awareness and self-expression. Art and craft activities are designed to build creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Storytelling sessions foster communication, empathy, and cultural understanding. Community events and festivals engage students in collaborative and community-focused learning," he explains.

With social-emotional learning (SEL) and art as its cornerstone, Thoughts to Action continues to empower students in low-income schools, fostering both personal and community growth.

"SEL and art are transformative tools that address the holistic needs of children. It builds resilience, empathy, and interpersonal skills, while art nurtures creativity and expression. These are critical for personal growth and community cohesion, yet often missing in



underserved schools," he explains

By integrating SEL and art into education, the organisation creates emotionally intelligent, well-rounded learners who are better equipped to navigate life's challenges. "Our goal is to cultivate learners who can thrive both academically and emotionally, breaking barriers imposed by socio-economic disadvantages," he adds.

To ensure the effectiveness of its programs, Thoughts to Action employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. "We gather feedback from teachers, students, and parents to assess behavioural changes and emotional growth," Rahul shares. "Pre- and post-program surveys, along with anecdotal success stories, provide deeper insights into our impact." The results speak for themselves. Rahul points to improved classroom behaviour, greater participation, and stronger community ties as indicators of success. "It's about creating lasting change, not just in students, but in the broader community as well," he emphasises.

When asked about that one story that stands out as a testament to the power of Thoughts to Action's programs, Rahul recalls "In one government school, we worked with a student who was initially shy and reluctant to participate in class. She struggled to express her thoughts and feelings. Through the program, she discovered her love for painting. As she engaged in art, her confidence grew, and she began forming stronger connections with her peers and teachers. It was a remarkable transformation," he says.

This success didn't stop with the student. Inspired by her progress, the teachers started incorporating creative approaches into their lessons, realising the potential of art to make education more engaging. "It's a ripple effect. When one life changes, it inspires change in others," he says proudly.

As a youth-led organisation, Thoughts to Action thrives on the energy and creativity of its team. Rahul believes in empowering young people to take ownership of their projects and ideas. "We encourage brainstorming sessions, provide training opportunities, and foster an inclusive environment where every voice matters," he explains. "This builds confidence and leadership skills within the team, ensuring that they feel valued and inspired."

Managing a non-profit like Thoughts to Action requires a unique set of leadership qualities. Rahul highlights empathy, adaptability, and the ability to inspire as essential traits. "As a leader, it's crucial to stay connected to the community's needs while empowering the team to take initiative," he says. "Clear communication and resilience are also key in navigating challenges."

When conflicts arise, Rahul emphasises the importance of open dialogue and collaboration. "We create a safe space for team members to express their perspectives and work together to find solutions," he explains. "Mutual respect and focusing on shared goals are what help us resolve conflicts constructively."

Working in underprivileged schools comes with its own set of hurdles. "Challenges include limited resources, infrastructure issues, and resistance to change," Rahul explains. Many schools are narrowly focused on academic performance, leaving little room for innovative approaches like SEL and art-based education. Building trust with teachers and administrators requires



persistence. "It takes time and patience, but once they see the impact, the resistance begins to fade," he says.

Cultural and societal barriers also pose challenges, but Thoughts to Action adopts a community-centric approach. "We respect local traditions and involve parents and stakeholders in the process. This helps us build stronger connections and ensures the community feels ownership of the programs," Rahul shares.

Looking ahead, Rahul sees significant opportunities for growth. "We aim to expand to more schools in Assam and develop a curriculum that integrates nature education with SEL," he says. By blending environmental awareness with social-emotional learning, Rahul hopes to create a holistic framework that prepares students

to face future challenges with resilience and empathy.

As a non-profit, financial sustainability is a constant challenge. Thoughts to Action relies on grants, donations, and partnerships with like-minded organisations. "We also generate minimal revenue from private programs like summer camps and kids' festivals, which help sustain our initiatives for government schools," Rahul explains. Securing funding remains difficult, but the team approaches potential donors with detailed proposals that highlight the measurable impact of their work. "Building strong relationships with funders and showcasing our results through reports and testimonials have been effective strategies," he says.

Sustainability is at the heart of Thoughts to Action's programs. Rahul stresses the importance of continuous feedback and community ownership. "Partnering with local stakeholders ensures our programs stay relevant," he says. Training educators to independently sustain SEL initiatives is also a cornerstone of the organisation's long-term strategy.

Rahul's goals for Thoughts to Action are ambitious yet grounded. In the short term, the organisation plans to refine its curriculum and expand to more government schools in Jorhat. The long-term vision includes establishing a Youth Resource Centre to foster leadership and civic engagement among young people, while continuing to integrate SEL and environmental education into its programs.

Rahul's message to the youth in the communities he serves is simple yet powerful "You are capable of creating change, no matter where you come from. Believe in your strengths, nurture your creativity, and don't let circumstances limit your dreams. The future belongs to those who dare to envision it differently." As Thoughts to Action grows, Rahul Bora's journey continues to inspire. His commitment to integrating SEL and art into education proves that holistic learning can break barriers, uplift communities, and create a generation of resilient, creative thinkers ready to shape the world.

Bhavadharani K



Centre for Social Initiative and Management

Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM) is a unit of Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani (MSDS). 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. www.csim.in

Contact Persons:

Ms. Marie Banu Rodriguez
Director, Chennai
@ 9884700029

Dr. Madhuri. R
Head, Coimbatore,
@ 91-9840222559

Dr. Agyeya Tripathi
Head - North & NE India
@ 91-8058662444

Mr. Sandeep Mehto,
Head – Hosangabad,
@ 91-96696 77054

CSIM also facilitates **Social Accounting and Audit** for social enterprises, CSR projects, and NGOs through Social Audit Network, India (SAN India).

For further information, please contact: Ms. **Latha Suresh**
Director, SAN, India
@ 92822 05123.
www.san-india.org

THE POWER OF THE UNREASONABLE PEOPLE: BENGALURU

Bengaluru, that swirling vortex of innovation and aspiration, where the unreasonable wield their power for change, beckons with tales of transformative visionaries. Among them stands Sree Ranga Rajan, the luminary behind Dibella India. Hailing from the arid lands of Ramnad, he rose through the rigors of textile studies in the UK to champion regenerative cotton and uplift smallholder growers organically.

Ranga, modest despite his immense expertise, graciously guided my first foray into Bengaluru's Initiatives for Development, a visionary trust steered by stalwarts like Salimath, a former banker, and a cohort of seasoned specialists in agriculture and enterprise finance. Together, we aim to bring regenerative practices and fair trade to North Karnataka, nurturing sustainability from grassroots up.

Amidst the city's pulsating rhythm, I found myself drawn to an exhibition of innovators, hosted by the Selco Foundation, where luminaries like Don Norman, sage of Everyday Design, shared insights with Bangaloreans hungry for transformative ideas. Negotiating the labyrinthine traffic, I arrived only to discover it was a private affair. Undeterred, my acquaintance with Harish Hande, founder of Selco, from our collaboration on 'Made in Bangalore,' bore fruit as he graciously showcased solar innovations powering everything from healthcare to honey dehydration.

The latter, a marvel by AltP Precision under Lakshman Sridhar's stewardship, mimics nature's finesse in drying honey using solar energy—a breakthrough poised for wider application, potentially transforming rural economies. The solar energy hospital—a Selco invention could transform energy deficit Zambia's country side and households. I was told WHO's thoughtful guidance with SELCO is in its way and hopefully Uka- impact pioneers can be part of such an initiative.

Yet, amidst these wonders, a meeting with Anil Annaiah, polymath and storyteller, stands out. His humility belies a breadth of achievements spanning literature to impactful films, each endeavor a testament to his commitment to societal good. Our impassioned exchange, spanning themes from health to social action, underscored his ethos of using intellect and wealth to bridge societal divides, encapsulated in his poignant words, "Health, intellect, wealth—the tripe issues defining global disparity."

Anil's upcoming venture, Sangoli Rayanna, promises to further this mission through art and activism, a beacon of hope in an increasingly complex world. His invitation to collaborate on Push-COP29, a social media initiative coinciding with the climate summit in Baku, is emblematic of his visionary spirit.



Unreasonable Champions: A Salute to Bengaluru's Fearless Citizens

I must confess that in my earlier reflections, I failed to mention a remarkable assembly of citizens from HSR Layout, Bengaluru—a group of relentless and unreasonable champions whose story deserves telling. Leading this battalion is the indomitable Dr. Shanthi Tmmala, a woman of fierce intelligence and compassion. A doctor by training, but by calling, a warrior for change, she left her medical practice behind to take on a battle of a different kind: the fight to reclaim a city buried under its own waste.

The once-proud Garden City had become a garbage city, its streets and parks drowning in the debris of unchecked urban sprawl. Solid waste, wet waste—it all piled up like a festering reminder of the cost of development without foresight. Waste management had become a nightmare, and the city, a grotesque parody of its former self. But where others saw disaster, Dr. Shanthi saw a call to arms. And in answering that call, she ignited a movement—mobilising an extraordinary group of unreasonable residents, people who refused to accept the status quo.

Thus was born the Swatcha Graha Kalika Kendra—a beacon of hope in the heart of HSR Layout, a center dedicated to teaching the art of waste management and composting. What began as a small initiative soon spread like wildfire. Parks across HSR now manage their waste with pride and care, and a biodiversity park has

sprung up, a living testament to the power of citizen action. The work of this movement is nothing short of contagious. Even a small group of awakened souls can transform a landscape—and the SGKK park is living proof, drawing visitors not just from Bengaluru, but from across the country and beyond.

Ratnakar, a dear classmate of mine and a retired senior banker, recently reflected, "Dr. Shanthi is a living force." He is right, of course. Her energy is unflagging, and her mission goes beyond waste management. She champions menstrual hygiene, too—travelling to schools and colleges, spreading her message of awareness and dignity. Her influence has stretched far beyond Karnataka; this very week, she is working in Hyderabad.

"I couldn't ask for a better teacher than Dr. Shanthi," remarked a college student who visited the biodiversity park. And it's true—she is more than a leader; she is a force of nature. Whenever the chaos of Bengaluru—its suffocating traffic and towering garbage heaps—overwhelms me, I find myself returning to HSR Layout, where the likes of Dr. Shanthi, Ratnakar Bhadravathi, and other unyielding spirits remind me of the power of unreasonable action.

As I take the story of this citizen revolution from my home in Bengaluru to my new home in Cambridge, UK, I dream of connecting these remarkable leaders to my ward in Arbury, Cambridge South. Perhaps there, too, the flame of unreasonable action will catch fire.

I salute these incredible citizen-



leaders—individuals who took ownership of their surroundings and, by doing so, showed the world what it means to wield unreasonable power. I think back to the day I walked through the SGKK park, alongside students and adults, my dear friend Shiva Prakash among them. He had only come to seek advice on starting a nursery, but he was soon swept up in the fervor, chanting slogans for a plastic-free Bengaluru. It was then that I realised: with these champions leading the way, even the wildest dreams of change could become real.

As I reflect on these encounters, I eagerly anticipate sharing the next chapter of my journey—a rendezvous with Bhupathy, the visionary behind Chennapatna's eco-friendly toys, where innovation meets tradition in the pursuit of sustainable futures.

Pushpanath Krishnamurthy

EMPOWERING CAREER CHOICES

Re-entering the workforce after pregnancy presents unique challenges for women. This transitional phase often involves balancing new responsibilities as a mother with professional aspirations, requiring significant adjustments in priorities, time management and workplace engagement. “As our founder, Dr Saundarya Rajesh experienced this phase herself, she realized that the situation for women from underprivileged families could be even more challenging. Limited access to childcare, financial resources and flexible work opportunities often exacerbate the difficulties these women face, making it harder for them to rebuild their careers. This realization pushed her to work on something to create pathways that empower underprivileged women,” says Mr. Eswar Bala, Vice President, Outreach and Impact at Avtar Human Capital Trust (AHCT), Chennai.

She wanted to understand this social issue deeply and recognise all kinds of barriers that affected their success in career. Her years long research led to an unanticipated finding. “The real issue was not lack of opportunities or the freedom to pursue, rather, it was lack of role models and mentors who can career guide the young girls from poor families. Where there were mentors or somebody from the family who could guide them, girls pursued higher education,” explains Eswar, iterating the strong need for a career intentionality program.

Project Puthri was started in 2017 as a first of its kind – it was country’s first career intentionality program focussed on underprivileged girls. Career guidance requires tailored approaches to effectively address the unique needs of different groups. For young girls from poor socio-economic backgrounds, the challenges are often amplified by the intersection of gender inequality and economic hardship. In their case, career guidance goes beyond merely building skills; it must focus on fostering self-confidence, shaping their identities and encouraging a mind-set of ambition and self-reliance.

These girls need to be inspired to envision a future where economic independence is attainable and integral to their sense of self-worth. “For example, when they learn time management, it must not just be limited to relating it to managing studies and chores, but also help them plan different milestones further ahead in life. Project Puthri’s approach with three pillars – mentoring, role modelling and career coaching – has played a pivotal role in breaking the barriers they face, enabling them to dream big and take actionable steps towards a brighter future,” he adds.

The project focusses upon girls in classes VIII to XII and hones their life skills to make them career ready. Backed by a strong team of volunteers, it is not only the girls who are benefitted but also the volunteers – comprised of interns from Social Work/Sociology courses, women who have taken a break from work due to multiple reasons, corporate teams, etc - the project has offered a launch pad for all of them. With the help of teachers, student beneficiaries are selected in the chosen schools. “We come down to about 20 girls per grade i.e. 100 girls in a school. All of them, during the course of our intervention, are guided to think and plan about future, in small doses. Keeping it completely activity based makes it easier to encourage the girls to open up and relate to future in a very subtle way,” elaborates Eswar.

Puthri has reached out to more than 20,000 girls from Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Bangalore.



Given the different locations these girls come from and the resultant differences in their personalities and attitudes, their reception of the program has also seen mixed responses. Implemented across four zones in Chennai, the team notes remarkable differences between girls from Velachery and those from Avadi. “Clearly, confidence is the sum of many unseen and unnoticed factors,” he quips, talking about a girl from Madurai whose project was recently recognised by the Corporation of Madurai.

For most of these girls, career aspirations are often limited to just two options: becoming a teacher or a doctor. This reflects not only a lack of awareness about diverse opportunities but also an inability to envision themselves in other roles. “We have even come across a girl who wanted to become a nurse but ended up choosing Commerce in Class XI,” shares Eswar Bala. This is where Puthri’s Role Model and Career Coach components play a crucial role. By introducing the girls to a wide range of career possibilities, the program helps them make informed decisions about their high school subject choices. A key element of this process is the psychometric tests conducted in Class XII, which encourage the students to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses

and future aspirations. In class XII, they go through the Puthri Career Choice Assessment (PCCA) test to help them choose courses in tertiary education. These tests are complemented by expert-led sessions and the distribution of a comprehensive career handbook. Together, these tools equip the girls to define their goals and explore alternative career paths closely aligned with their interests. “That is the level of counselling we try to reach. With 95% of our girls consciously choosing tertiary education, I would say we are being impactful,” he insists.

Gender equality remains incomplete without the active engagement of men. The other gender must be ready to handle women empowerment and support women in their journey. And with Puthri’s success, boys from the schools were also intrigued about a program for them. AHCT introduced the MITR – Men Impacting Trust and Respect project to sensitise boys on gender issues and encourage them to adopt attitudes and behaviours that foster mutual respect and understanding. The activity based graded course on gender sensitivity has reached 21 schools in three cities. Focusing on boys from classes IX to XII, the program is making a lasting impact on around 200 boys in each school. “When a boy

came up and told me that he is no longer shy to buy sanitary napkins for his mother and sister, we were elated. He also wished to see his father think like him,” recalls Eswar Bala.

Besides these projects, AHCT also implements the Puthri Scholarship Program that has benefitted more than 250 Puthris in the last three years, in completing their tertiary education. It involves the screening, selection of scholars, identifying donors and funding after university enrolment, evaluation of academic progress of the scholars and continued mentoring until the set goal is achieved. As of 2024, the scholarship program has supported over 250 graduates in fulfilling their dream of finishing tertiary education.

Apart from this, they have begun this new initiative of creating certification and advanced life skill programs for undergraduate women in colleges, to shape their intentionality to career readiness. Aptly named the Nipuni Career Pathing program, launched by the Tamil Nadu State Minister for School Education, Thiru. Anbil Mahesh on November 16th 2024, the program equips the selected cohort of deserving women students with possible industry relevant skills, thereby enabling them to be job ready by the end

of their college. Every week, scholars participate in sessions where successful individuals share their journeys with them. These sessions are part of a 75-hour hybrid program conducted over one academic year, during which the girls complete two certificate courses on various skill sets and engage with experts in different fields.

By combining career coaching, mentorship, role modelling and life skills development, AHCT is breaking down the barriers these girls face and empowering them to take control of their careers and economic independence. The impact of these projects extends beyond the girls themselves, as they also inspire positive change in the communities around them, including the boys involved in the MITR project. Through its comprehensive approach, AHCT is not only transforming individual lives but also contributing to a more equitable society, where both genders can thrive together, supporting one another on the journey to empowerment and success.

Shanmuga Priya.T



REDISCOVERING THE MEDICINAL POWER OF 'WEEDS'

A Walk Through Ancient Wisdom

In the fast-paced world we live in today, it's easy to overlook the healing potential that nature offers in its most humble forms. The plants that we often dismiss as weeds, or "poondu" in Tamil, have been revered for centuries in traditional medicine. Yet, in modern times, we tend to uproot them without a second thought, assigning them derogatory names and dismissing their medicinal value. This is a shame, as many of these plants were once part of the rich tapestry of Ayurvedic and Siddha treatments.

In my younger days, I was fortunate enough to be raised with plant-based remedies. These weren't just for curing ailments but were primarily used as preventive measures to ensure health and well-being. We lived in a world where herbs and plants from our surroundings were seen as natural resources for good health, and many of these remedies were passed down through generations.

Today, however, we live in a different reality. We often rush to pharmaceutical solutions, swallowing pills made from synthetic chemicals produced by pharma companies, without ever considering the natural alternatives available in our own backyards. The wisdom of our ancestors has been largely forgotten, and we have lost the deep respect we once had for nature's healing gifts.

The "Weeds" We Ignore

One day, while walking around my farmhouse in Mudaliyar Kuppam, I had an epiphany. The so-called weeds that grow freely around me might hold untapped potential for healing, just like the plants my ancestors once revered. As I walked among these plants, I realised that many of them had been left to grow wild and untouched, often considered nuisances. But what if these "weeds" were not weeds at all, but rather medicinal plants, waiting to be rediscovered?

Armed with my phone and Google Lens, I decided to identify some of these plants that had been growing on their own without human intervention. I spent about 30 minutes exploring and cataloging the plants, and the results were both surprising and enlightening.

Here are some of the plants I discovered, all of which are known for their medicinal properties:

1. **Kuppaimeni:** This plant is known for its anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties. It is commonly used to treat wounds, skin infections, and even joint pain in traditional medicine.
2. **Oodha Mulli:** Known for its ability to treat respiratory issues and act as a natural detoxifier, this plant has long been used to clear the airways and reduce inflammation.



PN Subramanian, positioned before the Nagalingam tree, is pictured on Gnanananda Ashram, Tirukoilur

3. **Kundu Mani:** This plant has been used in Siddha medicine for its ability to treat digestive disorders and alleviate gastrointestinal discomfort.
4. **Thazhuthazhai:** Often used to treat skin conditions and wounds, Thazhuthazhai has powerful antibacterial and healing properties.
5. **Asiatic Dayflower:** Known for its ability to soothe the skin and treat various ailments such as fever and inflammation, this flower is also used to promote general wellness.
6. **Kizhanelli:** This plant is famous for its antiviral properties and is often used to treat jaundice and other liver-related issues.
7. **Vazhukkai Pul:** Commonly used to aid in digestion and improve appetite, this plant also has benefits for the skin.
8. **Thotta Chinungi:** A medicinal herb used for its ability to treat

respiratory issues, Thotta Chinungi is known for its detoxifying qualities.

A Forgotten Tradition

The realisation that these plants were once an integral part of our medicinal knowledge left me both inspired and disheartened. How did we come to overlook the benefits of these simple, naturally growing plants? In our pursuit of modernity and convenience, we have abandoned the wisdom passed down by generations of healers and wise elders.

These plants, which grow on their own, have been forgotten or labeled as nuisances, when in fact they hold the key to many natural remedies. Whether it's a simple anti-inflammatory, a cure for digestive disorders, or a natural painkiller, these plants have been used for centuries in traditional healing practices, such as Ayurveda and Siddha medicine, to promote health and treat various conditions.

In just 30 minutes, I had rediscovered the power of nature's pharmacy. What a shame it is that we have neglected such valuable resources in favor of synthetic, often harmful, chemicals. By using Google Lens, I was able to reconnect with the ancient wisdom of my ancestors and see the plants around me in a new light.

Reconnecting with Nature's Medicine

This small exercise of identifying and learning about these plants was a humbling experience. It made me realise how far removed we have become from the simple, natural ways of healing. We no longer look to the earth for remedies, choosing instead to rely on chemicals and synthetic products. The irony is that, while pharmaceutical companies synthesise chemical solutions from plants, we continue to ignore the very plants that could provide us with the same or better results.

The wisdom of using plant-based medicines as a preventive measure is something that we need to reconnect with. In a world where health crises are becoming increasingly common, it is time we begin to value the healing potential that exists naturally all around us.

The Way Forward

If there's one takeaway from this experience, it's that we need to shift our mindset. Instead of blindly uprooting what we call weeds, we should pause and ask ourselves if there is more to these plants than meets the eye. Perhaps, by re-educating ourselves and embracing traditional healing methods, we can not only improve our health but also restore a deeper connection with nature.

Incorporating these plants into our daily lives—whether through teas, tinctures, or topical applications—could be a step towards returning to a more holistic and sustainable way of living. As we reintroduce plant-based remedies into our lives, we honor the wisdom of our ancestors and protect the environment, creating a healthier, more balanced future for all.

The journey of rediscovering these medicinal plants has been eye-opening, and it serves as a reminder that true healing is often rooted in nature itself. It's time to remember the ancient wisdom that once guided us and to treat the plants that grow freely around us with the respect they deserve. By doing so, we might just find the path to better health—without the need for harmful pills and synthetic chemicals.

PN Subramanian

DREAMS FROM DEEP ROOTS



Entrepreneurship offers the freedom to create, innovate and directly witness the impact of one's efforts, which fosters a stronger emotional and intellectual engagement. The challenges and rewards of building something from the scratch cultivate a sense of ownership and fulfilment, giving entrepreneurs a purpose-driven path that resonates deeply with their sense of identity and contribution to the world.

Kamalanathan, a native of Pondicherry, has carved his unique path from engineering to entrepreneurship, driven by the desire to find meaning in his work. His father was a teacher and ensured that his son grew to be a natural learner. "One must learn enough to identify an opportunity when it comes. But one must unlearn and learn even more to be able to create opportunities for self and others. He always said this and I realised its deep meaning in my entrepreneurial journey," he reminisces.

After graduating in engineering and serving as an area manager for a corporate company in Chennai, Kamalanathan felt disconnected from his role. This inner discontent led him to pursue entrepreneurship, leading to his enrolment in the Entrepreneurship Development Program offered by the Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of Tamil Nadu, in Guindy, Chennai. This experience exposed him to the vast opportunities in agriculture, especially in cultivating high-value crops like aromatic plants. He then underwent a training in Lucknow on the cultivation of aromatic plants.

He identified agriculture as his calling and started his journey cautiously, recognizing the potential in farming aromatic plants. He began with Moringa plantations and experienced success with the sale of moringa powder. Encouraged by this attempt, he diversified into indigo and palmgroves, with a focus on crop diversity, soil rejuvenation and market demands.

His most notable venture has been the large-scale cultivation of Vetiver, a crop with miracle like applications in bioengineering. Vetiver, with its deep roots and diverse applications, intrigued him. The plant was not only known for its soil-conserving properties but also for the essential oil extracted from its roots—a key ingredient in perfumes, cosmetics and traditional medicines. "Vetiver is the only native plant that is known across the world with its Tamil name. The demand for Vetiver oil in both domestic and international markets was promising. I saw an opportunity to create something impactful," he explains.

While Vetiver farming is gaining attention for its economic and environmental benefits, many aspiring entrepreneurs and farmers abandon their ventures due to the significant challenges involved in processing the crop. The labor-intensive nature of harvesting Vetiver roots, the lengthy distillation process for extracting essential oil, and the high initial investment in specialized equipment are formidable barriers. Additionally, the need

for consistent quality and adherence to market standards adds to the complexity. Recognizing these challenges in cultivating and processing Vetiver, Kamalanathan invested in extensive research for over two years. He analysed various Vetiver varieties, their oil yields and market demand, ultimately making a strategic decision to manage the entire production chain from his fields.

"Vetiver's strength lies in its resilience and consistent demand," he explains. Despite the hurdles—such as the 48-hours harvesting process and 60 hours-long distillation, he views these as opportunities due to the reduced competition in the market. "It was important to get it right from the start. I wanted to create a model that not only generated profits but also empowered people," he says. His endeavour to develop good quality Vetiver seeds was also supported and rewarded by the National Medicinal Plants Board, Ministry of Ayush.

Kamalanathan designed his own Vetiver distillation unit. The engineer turned entrepreneur believes that a self-made unit can be tailored to specific production needs, allowing experimentation with different Vetiver varieties and processing methods to optimize yield and quality. "To stand out in the market, my product has to meet different standards. Self-processing allows for precise monitoring of the distillation process, ensuring high-quality Vetiver oil. This consistency can enhance the product's reputation and marketability," he adds.

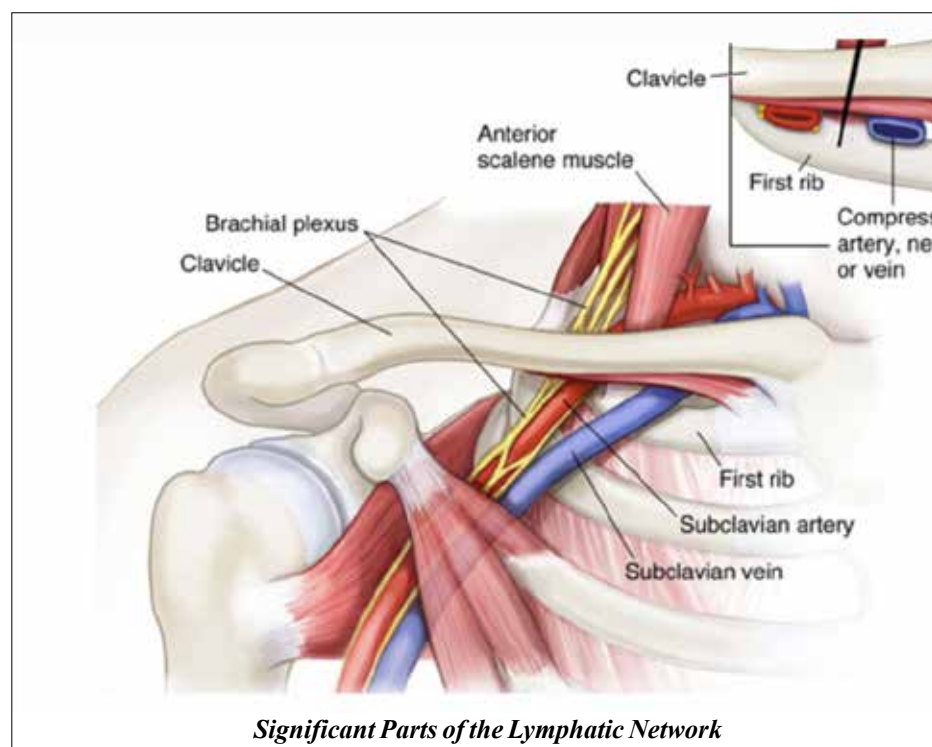
Recognizing Vetiver's role in preventing soil erosion, he distributes free saplings to areas prone to landslides. "This plant is a gift to the planet. It stabilizes soil and cleans water. I wanted more people to see its value. It has a potential role to play in combatting global warming. Our ancestors preserved immense knowledge about native plants. It's our duty to conserve and spread it," he says passionately. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kamalanathan's efforts took on a new dimension. He supplied Vetiver roots to the Tamil Nadu government for producing Kabasura Kudineer, a traditional herbal drink widely used to boost immunity.

Agriculture graduates from Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry visit his farm and factory every year to learn all processes involved in cultivation, harvesting and processing of Vetiver. With his domestic operations thriving and a reputation for producing premium-quality Vetiver oil, Kamalanathan is now setting his sights on the international market. He envisions opening an office in Europe to directly manage sales and build a robust network with global clients. According to him, this move is not just about business growth but about showcasing the potential of Indian agriculture and traditional knowledge on a global stage. "I believe Vetiver can be a bridge connecting our heritage with the world. I'm ready to take this leap," he promises.

-Shanmuga Priya.T

LIFE, THY NAME IS MOVEMENT

[The Story So Far: We have discussed good sleep, good habits, decision making, and stress vis-a-vis good health and wellness in some depth till now. This article looks at movement, and some of the dimensions it impacts. This discussion of movement will be continued over the next article in this series too]



When a baby is born, the first thing that the doctors and nurses check the baby for, is something called the APGAR score. This is an acronym for five parameters that help to define how the baby is doing, and the letters stand for:

- Activity
- Pulse
- Grimace
- Appearance
- Respiration

Some of these terms are self-explanatory - we know what 'Activity', 'Pulse' and 'Respiration' mean. 'Appearance' refers to the colour of the baby's skin - bluish or blue-tinged colour indicates that the circulation is not good enough, while all shades of pink/red show that the circulatory system is doing fine. 'Grimace' refers to sneezing/coughing and other vocal sounds and facial movements that the baby makes as the lungs and all the channels leading to them start working for the first time.

Whereas the origin as well as the implications of the APGAR score are interesting in their own right, the reason I mention them here is to draw attention to the fact that no less than 4 out of these 5 essential, life-defining parameters, have something to do with movement. Activity is another word for movement, pulse involves the moving of the heart muscles and all the related vessels, grimacing/coughing/sneezing involve a complex set of coordinated internal movements, and so does respiration. That is the extent to which movement and life are interconnected; one implies the other.

Yet as children grow up, we gradually forget the importance of movement. There are still schools which force students to sit

still in class, because they mistakenly associate sitting still with paying attention, in spite of the growing evidence from modern research that almost all children learn better when they are allowed to move freely, fiddle with bits of thread or toys while listening to lessons, rock or twirl on their chairs, or doodle. As childhood passes (if children are unlucky, then in schools where an inordinate amount of time is spent sitting in classrooms, and an abysmally small amount moving, whether it is in art class or sports class or music class), and we enter adulthood, it becomes commonplace to spend the whole day at a desk. I sometimes think that desk-bound adults would probably score lesser on an APGAR test than newborns!

The deeply negative result that this overlooking of the need for movement has, is coming to the fore now. We are seeing an alarming rise in the number of people suffering from disorders like painfully stiff joints, chronic backache and neckache, lack of basic flexibility, migraines caused by bad neck posture, and also all the secondary diseases caused by lack of exercise such as cardiovascular disorders, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, anxiety, depression and even dementia. Lack of exercise also has a close causal relationship with immunity; let's see how.

We all know that not having a strong immune system is the reason for multiple ills - starting from a cold, to various tummy upsets, to sore throats and fevers, and even small wounds that won't heal quickly enough, a weak immune system leads to us falling sick all the time and interferes no end with our lives and life-

goals. To know how this is related to movement, and what kind of movement exactly, we need to look at the structure of the immune system in the human body a little closer.

A crucial part of the immunity mechanism is the lymphatic system of the body, consisting broadly of the lymphatic vessel network, and the organs involved in the production and circulation of lymphatic fluid or lymph. The colourless fluid from blood that permeates into tissues from blood capillaries is called lymph. Among other functions, it collects waste products, bacteria and other microorganisms, and damaged cells, and then drains into lymphatic capillaries and lymphatic vessels. The lymphatic vessels carry this lymph through multiple lymph nodes found throughout the body.

It is the lymph nodes that first trap, and then recognise any invading organisms and disease-causing germs in the system. As soon as this recognition takes place, the different layers and systems of the immune system are activated, and the body starts fighting the invasion. Thus the lymphatic system acts initially as the sentinel that alerts the body to a breach, and then plays a most important role in producing and transporting the cells that fight for us, and keep us from falling sick.

So where are these lymph nodes located, and how does the lymph travel through the body? Lymph nodes are located throughout the body, but of the approximately 800 lymph nodes present, more than 300 are clustered around the neck region. And big clusters are found in the axial and inguinal regions (the places where the arms and legs attach to the body) and in the abdominal region. The lymph travels throughout the body and drains into the right and left lymph ducts. These ducts empty into the subclavian vein, returning the lymph into the circulatory system where it once again starts its journey around the body, mixed with blood. Where is the subclavian vein located? In the neck region, close to the clavicle or the Collar Bone.

Now comes the important question - which movement deeply involves the neck region/collar bone, as well as the entire abdominal regions? Did you say 'deep breathing'? Yes, that's the correct answer! When we properly do all the movements involved in real deep breathing (full yogic breathing) we are powerfully stimulating the lymph ducts to pump lymph around the body in an efficient and brisk way. This is all the more significant because the human lymphatic system does not have a heart of its own to pump the lymph - it depends exclusively on the movement of the body to get around. This is the anatomically validated reason why we keep saying 'breathe deeply, breathe deeply' in our yoga classes - every time you do it, you are

giving that extra support to your lymphatic system, which is the physical and anatomical complement of your immune system. Combine full-arm movements with neck movements, and you are simultaneously stimulating all the 300 lymph nodes around the neck areas, plus the large clusters around the axial regions, toning and bracing your immune system no end.

Yoga emphasises this one movement - deep breathing - over all others. And now we know why - it is because just this one movement, done every day, has the potential to keep you disease-free, because your immune system is in great shape. Not running, not bench-pressing, not push-ups, not some complex contortions. Just deep breathing, so deep that it involves the collar bone and also the abdominal region. And you need not even sit down and do this exclusively. As you go about your daily work, just remember to breathe deeply. In addition to keeping your immune system in top gear, you will also see many other wonderful benefits, some of which we will discuss in more detail in the next article of this series.

We wish you a wonderful year ahead, full of deep breaths which serve to remind you every minute of the miracle that is life...

A. Ramashree



The author Ramashree Paranandi is a teacher, and a partner in The Organic Farm, Nedumaram, TN. She consults on applications of yoga, natural therapies and music for good health, and often stays over at the farm to recharge herself with pollution-free days spent amidst natural surroundings. An MA in Yogashastra enables her to apply the knowledge of the ancient texts to contemporary situations.



LUD CONFERENCE:

A PLATFORM FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE IN HEALTH, SOCIAL, AND EDUCATION SECTORS

The LUD Conference, coordinated by CSIM (Centre for Social Initiative and Management), opened with a powerful keynote address by **Dr. Sumathi Narayanan**, who set the tone for the event by emphasising the value of diverse perspectives. She highlighted the importance of fostering emotional, social, and collective consciousness while urging participants to distinguish meaningful "voices" from mere "noise" when tackling societal challenges.

Panel Discussions: Insights and Solutions Across Key Sectors

1) **Health Panel:** Moderated by Dr. Kumarbabu, the health panel featured insightful contributions:

- **Dr. Sudhakar** shared his inspiration for working in child development, underscoring the importance of youth involvement in addressing invisible disabilities such as autism, ADHD, and OCD.
- **Mr. Ameer Khan** explored the intersection of health and socio-economic factors, stressing that health is a fundamental right. He also addressed the prevalence of issues like tuberculosis and the commercialised nature of the medical industry.
- **Dr. Shiny**, a nutritionist, advocated for holistic health by emphasising the interplay of physical, mental, emotional, and environmental well-being. She encouraged a lifestyle anchored in a balanced diet, quality sleep, and regular exercise.

2) **Social Panel:** Dr. Sudha moderated the social panel, which spotlighted sustainability and gender equality:

- Mr. Dawood highlighted sustainability challenges, advocating for conscious consumerism and improved recycling practices to combat environmental pollution.
- Mr. Balakrishnan addressed gender equality, challenging stereotypes and societal-imposed norms. He emphasised the importance of educating boys early about shared household responsibilities and fostering gender equity in everyday life.

3) **Education Panel:** Under the moderation of Dr. Balaji Sampath, the education panel tackled systemic educational issues:

- Ms. Chandra from EFL referenced alarming

statistics from the ASER report, which revealed that 40% of 8th graders in rural areas struggle with basic literacy, highlighting the urgent need for interventions.

- Mr. Karthik from Srishti Village shared his innovative approach to integrated education, which includes engaging disabled children in farming activities to foster learning and inclusion.
- Mr. Sriram of SVRCC spoke about his organisation's initiatives to educate children of convicts and juvenile delinquents, stressing the role of society in supporting marginalised groups.

Changemakers' Stories: Inspiring Journeys of Resilience

The conference also featured personal stories of changemakers who have turned challenges into opportunities for impact:

- **Arun Fernandez** recounted his struggles with dyslexia and his journey to advocate for and support children with learning disabilities.
- **Logammal** shared her success in leading children's parliaments, which have effectively lobbied for community needs, including the closure of a liquor shop in her village.
- **Ponni**, a transgender activist, spoke about her journey to establish a dance school in Tuticorin, shedding light on the hurdles she faced in gaining societal acceptance and creating a space for inclusivity.

A Call for Collective Action

The conference concluded with an address by **Mr. Jayashankar** of the Tribal Welfare Society, who discussed his efforts to mainstream Narikurava children into regular schools. He also highlighted his advocacy for securing Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the Narikurava community to ensure greater opportunities and recognition.

The LUD Conference brought together an array of voices, sparking dialogue on pressing issues across health, social, and education sectors. By spotlighting innovative solutions and transformative efforts, the conference inspired participants to take actionable steps toward driving change in their communities.

Marie Banu



“To inspire youth, we need to give them ownership and leadership opportunities.”

Fr. Lijo Thomas shares with Marie Banu about Let Us Dream initiative

Fr. Lijo Thomas is a visionary leader and community builder committed to empowering individuals through education and service. As the founder of the Let Us Dream initiative, he inspires changemakers worldwide by fostering collaboration and promoting impactful grassroots efforts. His work combines spiritual guidance with practical solutions, emphasising inclusivity and social responsibility.

Fr. Lijo's expertise in motivational theory led to the creation of the DREAMS framework, helping individuals achieve personal and community transformation. With a background in theology and a passion for nurturing youth leadership, he continues to inspire action and innovation, building a global network of compassionate doers.

In an exclusive interview Fr. Lijo Thomas shares with Marie Banu about Let Us Dream initiative.

What inspired you to initiate Let Us Dream?

Let Us Dream was inspired by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, whose vision of setting goals, working hard, and achieving dreams deeply resonated with me. Initially, as a shy and reserved person, I struggled with confidence. My journey took a transformative turn when I joined a college music band. Performing inspirational songs and speaking about aspirations combined purpose with fun. This phase was foundational in developing the project's core philosophy.

Over time, what began as music-based motivational sessions transitioned into more structured, theory-backed initiatives during my doctoral studies. With guidance from my professor, Dr. Pauline Leonard, we conceptualised the DREAMS framework: Desire, Readiness, Empowerment, Action, and Mastery. Each stage incorporates intrinsic and extrinsic motivational theories to help participants achieve lasting change.

The project matured into a community-driven effort, involving college students and volunteers to empower middle-school children. The evolution of this initiative has been a testament to the power of shared goals and collaboration.

How did the Let Us Dream conference come about, and why do you emphasise keeping it small and free?

The conference stemmed from the realisation that many individuals and organisations were engaged in impactful community service but lacked a platform to share their stories and connect with like-minded doers. The concept of the conference was simple: bring together people making a difference, not for accolades, but for mutual inspiration and learning.

We keep the conference small and free because intimate gatherings foster genuine connections. When we go bigger, it is expensive and complex. People cannot afford it. So I wanted it to be very, very small because small is very powerful.

Sitting in a circle, participants can engage more deeply than in a large auditorium setting. The lack of a fee ensures inclusivity, enabling anyone passionate about community service to participate without financial barriers. This format allows for meaningful interactions and creates a unique space where experiences and ideas are exchanged.

How did the conference expand from one location to



multiple cities and countries? What challenges did you face?

The first Let Us Dream conference took place at Louisiana Tech University in 2017. Its success inspired interest from other institutions, leading to an invitation from Binghamton University in New York. However, logistical challenges such as travel and accommodation costs prompted a shift in the model. Instead of hosting the same conference in different locations, we encouraged local communities to create their versions, making each conference independent yet aligned with the shared vision.

The biggest challenge was ensuring consistency in purpose and quality across locations. To address this, we established core committees in each city, created detailed manuals, and aligned all events with common goals. This decentralised model empowered local communities while maintaining the integrity of the Let Us Dream ethos.

How many conferences have been conducted so far, and what is the scale of participation?

Since its inception, the Let Us Dream conference series has seen significant growth. In the U.S., each conference attracts around 150 participants on average, while in India, events draw 400–500 attendees. Over six years, this translates to thousands of participants across multiple locations.

We deliberately rotate hosting duties among institutions to foster collaboration and mutual learning. Each institution brings its unique culture and practices to the event, enriching the experience for everyone involved. This dynamic approach not only broadens the reach but also nurtures best practices across institutions.

What role do universities play in the success of Let Us Dream conferences?

Universities are pivotal to the success of these conferences because they house the richest human resources—students and faculty. These institutions provide not only the venue but also a pool of

enthusiastic and innovative individuals who drive the events.

By rotating hosting responsibilities, we encourage universities to collaborate, learn from each other, and implement best practices. This exchange fosters a culture of cooperation and continuous improvement, enriching both the conferences and the institutions involved.

How do you sustain volunteer interest and ensure long-term commitment?

Sustaining volunteer interest hinges on two key factors: the perceived impact of their work and the opportunities for networking and growth. When volunteers see tangible outcomes, such as participants sharing life-changing experiences, it fuels their passion and commitment. The conferences also provide a platform for volunteers to connect with like-minded individuals and organisations, broadening their horizons.

We make a conscious effort to give volunteers ownership of their roles, ensuring they feel valued and credited for their contributions. Testimonials, peer recognition, and opportunities to share their stories further reinforce their sense of purpose and belonging.

How can we inspire more youth to engage with initiatives like Let Us Dream?

To inspire youth, we need to give them ownership and leadership opportunities. Young people are more likely to commit when they feel their ideas and efforts are valued. Beyond events, continuous engagement through storytelling, peer-led initiatives, and showcasing real impact can keep their interest alive.

Social media plays a vital role in amplifying their contributions, allowing them to share their experiences and inspire others. Youth are naturally drawn to causes where they can see tangible results and feel part of a larger movement. By fostering a sense of community and shared purpose, we can motivate them to stay involved long-term.