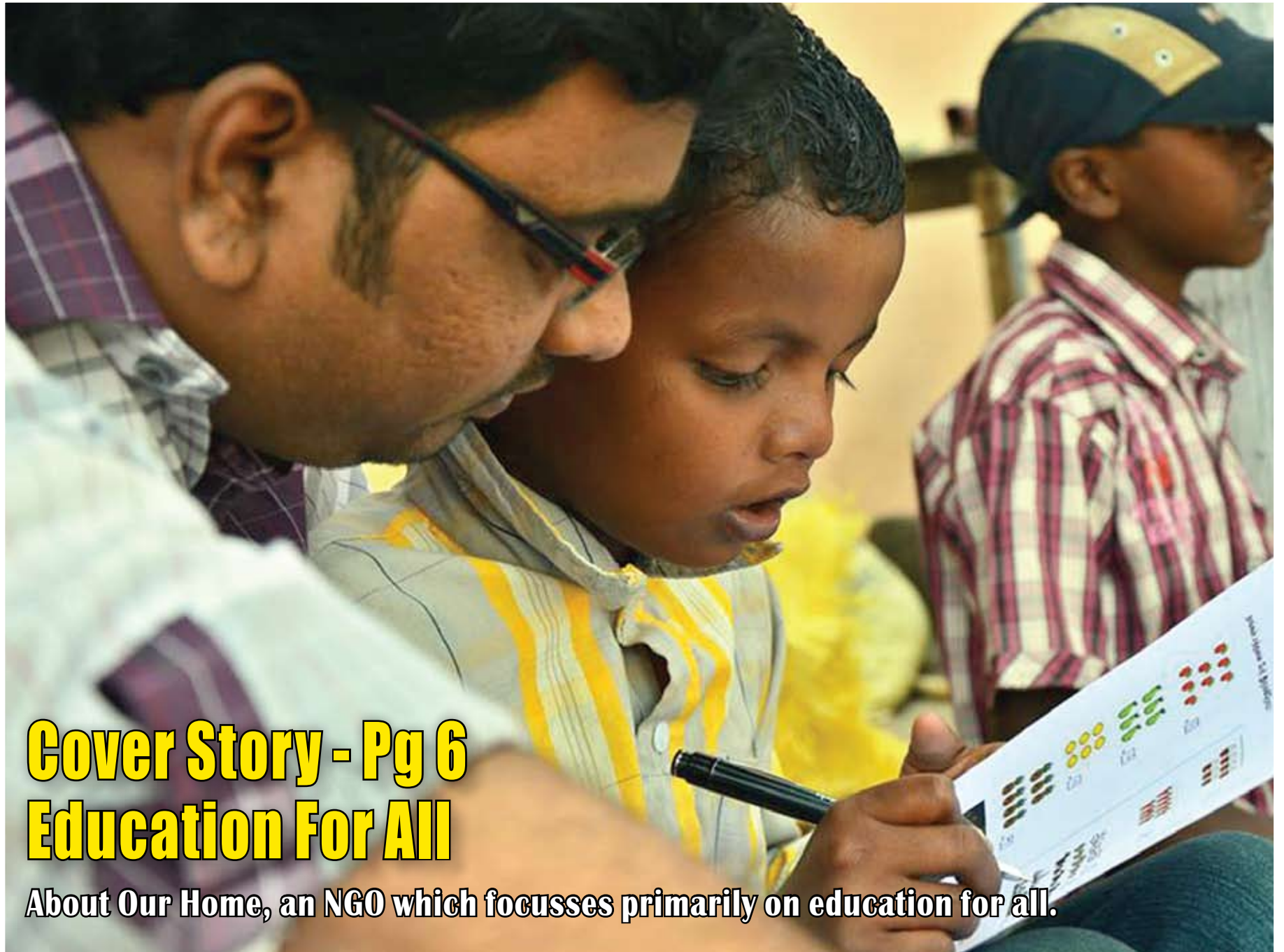


Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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Cover Story - Pg 6 Education For All

About Our Home, an NGO which focusses primarily on education for all.



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Water, water, more water
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Lighting the Urban Slums
About Pollinate Energy, a social
enterprise in Bangalore that uses
solar lighting to electrify rural and
urban slums



Chit Chat Pg 12

**"In 2001, LIBA was ranked 54th
and in 2004 it ranked 9th. This was
purely my achievement and am
proud of that!"**

An exclusive interview with
Rev. Fr. Casimir Raj, Founder, LIBA

From the Editor

Dear Friend,

We need to learn to love all. We should learn to forgive and forget. It is easy to forget our own faults and difficult to forget the fault of others. Stop judging and pointing fingers and you begin to accept people as they are and to overlook their shortcomings and human frailties. A sense of peace and contentment is born out of forgiveness.

At the end of each day, sit back and recount how many people you might have hurt knowingly or unknowingly. It may not be possible to go back to all of them to apologise directly, but by taking God as a mediator, ask pardon for your guilt from all.

You learn that people don't always say what they mean or mean what they say and that not everyone will always be there for you and everything isn't always about you.

Many say: "Be patient, be patient!" But, is it possible to be patient always? One cannot be a silent spectator to improper things happening in around the world and also right in front of us. Patience is not how long one can wait; but how well one behaves while waiting.

Let us share our, views or offer constructive criticisms in a manner which will reach the concerned. At the same time, if we fight for everything, it will become a mockery.

To live a peaceful life, love and forgiveness is the mantra! The changemakers featured in this issue are all those who have used this mantra to make a difference in the lives of many.

Marie Banu

Peace Begins With Me

Life is not fair, he doesn't understand me, this is my destiny, what can I do, why does she treat me so badly, and such other phrases are common laments, heard by us several times a day. Most of us are so outwardly focused that we believe the root of all our issues is in the external environment. With such external tuning we believe that the outside is a reflection of our inner environment, which constitutes our beliefs, feelings, thoughts, anxieties, prejudices, fears, hopes, trust, etc. However, it is the exact opposite – our external environment is a reflection of our inner environment.

As we reflect on this phrase, what stands out for us is to take 100% responsibility for finding the source of peace within. In today's world, responsibility is defined more by the external pursuits undertaken by us and not as much what we do within. However, in this context, responsibility is about clearing the clutter within so that our experience of the outer is an outflow of the inner ecosystem.

Peace begins with me urges us to bring our attention back to who we are as individuals; to become aware of our deepest beliefs, thoughts, and feelings. So, when we seek Peace in our environment, we need to seek this from within and not blame the external environment for lack of our peace.

While many of us may know this principle theoretically, we don't really get around to beginning this journey from within. This may be because when we turn inward we encounter guilt and rarely progress to taking responsibility. In this inward path we first come across the ego, which distracts us from looking deeply and beyond, by firing up the blame-game; encouraging us to be judgmental, rationalizing, and so on.

A peaceful heart makes a peaceful person.

A peaceful person makes a peaceful family.

A peaceful family makes a peaceful community.

A peaceful community makes a peaceful nation.

A peaceful nation makes a peaceful world.

— Maha Ghosananda

Yours Energetically

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

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

For most us, the above guidance translates as.....

When I have a peaceful world, I will experience a peaceful nation

When I have a peaceful nation, I will experience a peaceful community

When I have a peaceful community, I will experience a peaceful family

When I have peaceful family, I will be a peaceful person

When I am a peaceful person, I will have a peaceful heart

In this case, we have transferred the responsibility of having a peaceful heart to everything outside of us! Now is the time to 'create peace within' and not seek it from outside.

A long time ago, there lived three brothers. All of them studied medicine and became doctors, but only one – the youngest – ever became famous. His name was known far and wide as a miracle worker; patients who seemed to be beyond all hope would go to him and be cured. One day, someone asked him, "Why are you the only famous one among your brothers?" His reply was, "I can cure people even at the point of death, so everyone knows me. My older brother can detect and cure sickness before it grows too serious, so there are few who know him. And my eldest brother takes such good care of people's health that they rarely get sick at all, so he remains unknown outside of his village. "Working on Peace within is somewhat like the work of the eldest brother, where he was not very well known but was truly contributing to good health. When we work on ourselves, the others may not see it or even talk about it immediately, but it is the single most important ingredient in creating a peaceful world.

"Peace begins with me. Reconciliation begins with me. Healing begins with me. So when you practice deep breathing and smiling to the pain in you, and vow to begin anew, when you practice loving kindness, taking care of your pain and suffering, you are already practicing taking care of the other person."

— Thich Nhat Hanh

MAN IN THE MIRROR

—Michael Jackson

*I'm gonna make a change
For once in my life
It's gonna feel real good
Gonna make a difference
Gonna make it right
As I, turn up the collar on
My favorite winter coat
This wind is blowing my mind
I see the kids in the streets
With not enough to eat
Who am I to be blind?
Pretending not to see their needs
A summer's disregard, a broken bottle top
And one man's soul (and a one man's soul)
They follow each other on the wind ya' know
'Cause they got nowhere to go
That's why I want you to know
I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you want to make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself, and then make a change
I've been a victim of a selfish kind of love
It's time that I realize
That there are some with no home, not a nickel to loan
Could it be really mean, pretending that they're not alone?
A willow deeply scarred, somebody's broken heart
And a washed-out dream
They follow the pattern of the wind ya' see
'Cause they got no place to be
That's why I'm starting with me
I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could have been any clearer
If you want to make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself and then make that Change!*

Water, water, more water

All of us know that water is a very critical element in nature that sustains life on earth. Yet, there is very little done to replenish our water resources in the light of modernisation and industrialisation. Subash Chandra Reddy has been advocating change in this respect by promoting rain water harvesting methods in villages at Andhra Pradesh and also at Hyderabad.

Reddy has a Diploma in Electronics. From being an active sports person during his college days, he settled with a job at BSNL and is now BSNL's Junior Telecom Officer at Hyderabad.

In the late 90's Reddy's endeavour to work on something constructive led him to volunteer with many organisations. He visited many spiritual centres and also the Jiddukrishnamurthy Centre, where he met his mentor, Dr Venkat. Impressed by Dr Venkat's session at the Centre, Reddy decided to embrace his pragmatism. A poster that read—"Thinking is not doing, planning is not doing. Only doing is doing."—in Dr Venkat's room has been Reddy's inspiration since.

"Dr Venkat told me that water and soil in the right quantity and quality are very crucial for a nation to prosper," recalls Reddy who soon identified himself with the cause of water and soil conservation. He founded the NGO SMARAN in 1997 and initiated renovation of neglected traditional water bodies that provided irrigation and livelihood for farmers. Renovation of Beera Cheruvu tank in Soornagar Mandal helped convert 25 acres of fallow land into cultivable land, resulting in an additional income for the farmers in that region. "Interactions with the District Collector opened up new opportunities for me. He suggested that I take up development of 100 acres of land. Working on this open land brought me closer to the issue," shares Reddy who grew more passionate about water and soil conservation.

Reddy's comprehension of all these issues in the context of sustainability came over at a time when the term carbon foot print was still alien to all of us. Enlightened by his mentor and the ensuing conversations with farmers, Reddy realised his mentor's message, that inputs for agriculture must be reasonable and close to nature. Presently operational in the areas of Ranga Reddy, Medak, Nalgonda, and Hyderabad, SMARAN has undertaken micro watershed development, nursery, rain water harvesting in rural and urban areas. The organisation also conducts free health camps in urban slums and rural areas, provides training for farmers (save grain campaigns) in natural pest management, compost making, etc.

Reddy learnt about CSIM from a friend he met at the Jiddukrishnamurthy Centre. "I actually belong to the first batch of CSIM Hyderabad. More than management



of non-profits, CSIM helped me choose my area of focus—water. I am now able to read and connect everything to water. I can read between the lines for the sake of water," he says.

"A considerable amount of electricity can be saved by restricting lighting of hoardings for only three hours every evening. The power saved by this measure is nothing compared to what we can save by replenishing ground water level by just a litre," he adds.

Along with passion Reddy also acquired the knack of presenting the case for rain water harvesting using suitable structures with diligent documentation where numbers can help advocate for rain water harvesting on a large scale. "I owe my clarity on this issue to CSIM. They equipped me with the skills required to document and prove the impact that my technical expertise can bring in. I am sure all this will go on to build a policy on water conservation through rain water harvesting (RWH)," he says.

Reddy feels that RWH is never understood in its totality. "The chain of benefits that flow from conserving water is not fully understood. Thus, there is a need to quantify outcomes of all our models. It does take time to document all these, but it is essential in order to take RWH forward on a larger scale in urban areas as well," he explains.

Lamenting about norms for construction flouted so blatantly, he asserts that the little space available to replenish our ground water reserves must be exploited for the larger good. "Roads are cemented, soil is carpeted, and floors are tiled. Where is the soil? RWH is very easy in places like Chennai where the terrain is sandy. Percolation of rain water to the water table



"More than management of non-profits, CSIM helped me choose my area of focus—water. I am now able to read and connect everything to water."

may not be that easy in places like Hyderabad where the terrain is rocky. Hence, there is need for using alternative methods that calls for technical expertise. This is where we have played a role so far," explains Reddy.

He is deeply disturbed by the lack of inquisitiveness amongst people and other stakeholders who limit themselves to standard solutions without bothering about the utility or effectiveness of the models used. "People are ready to buy water and deepen bore wells but are not inclined to know what a long term solution could be," he laments. He feels that efforts must be taken to make RWH an inherent component while planning any construction. This comes at a very minimal cost and precious rain water can be saved



rather than being fed to sewage lines or left to stagnate on the roads.

Inverse Bore Well (IBW) method of RWH is widely promoted by SMARAN wherein dry or abandoned bore wells and even working bore wells are converted into recharging structures. NIFT in Madhapur used to buy 15 tankers everyday to supplement its water needs. Reverse tube well method implemented by Reddy and team at NIFT has brought down this external dependency to just 8

tankers a day within a period of one year. From the following year, NIFT did not have to depend on tankers as the water tables were replenished. NIFT therefore saved Rs. 50,00,000 per year apart from having an increased yield from other three bore wells that were present in the campus.

Given the kind of change SMARAN can bring in through its technical expertise, Reddy and team are being consulted by individuals, gated communities, and institutions to check RWH feasibility and establish appropriate structures that recharged ground water reserves. "Yet, after all the feasibility is studied, many clients still say no to this. Water conservation is never a priority for them," he sighs.

Reddy was recently awarded the Green Warrior Award by AP Forest Department for improving ground water levels through innovative methods. He is also a recipient of Aam Aadmi Award for water conservation presented by AP Biodiversity in the World Biodiversity meet held at Hyderabad in 2012. A growing client base and acknowledgement is reason to celebrate but Reddy is looking forward to more.

"I am into this ocean. I am hopeful," he concludes.

—Shanmuga Priya. T

My Unsung hero

Simple, loving and resolute - Manoharan

It was in May 1989 that my good friend Narender, who was my colleague as research staff at IIM Ahmedabad, introduced me to Muralidhar and his friends. Murali and his friends lived at Anand, working for the NDDB. I often used to visit another friend of mine who was teaching at IRMA between 1988 and 1989. That was when Narender insisted that I must visit Murali also.

I met Murali, Manoharan, Ramanathan, Tamil Nambi, Srini and Rajan... the list goes on. I saw some very common traits in all these guys—a high level of confidence, complete self-belief and extreme commitment to the cooperative structure (the Anand model). Each of them was raring to do something different that would enable him to impact society in his own way.

This article focuses on Manoharan, who I consider to be a great champion. In my view, there could be any number of factors shaping his future and destiny. However, there are aspects of his personality I have observed and know well, which would make this humble person a champion in his own right. I would call him a “leader in own terms and style” (LOTS)!

Manoharan was a very simple person. Just by looking at this man, you would not have realized that he was a merit scholar as an engineer and a management graduate. He ensured that wherever it was not required, his education did not influence his natural personality. Very few people can sustain such simplicity. Whenever I met him, I noticed that his dress sense was always simple, reflecting his personality. His quality of not throwing the weight of his educational achievements and his intellect around was what made him different from others in the development sector.

The fact remains that simplicity helps not just to reach out to people, but also to be available for them. Manoharan mastered the art of being approachable and making anyone comfortable when dealing with him. Simplicity is also an asset in problem identification. One can develop solutions to situations that arise as and when required, with whatever tools are available. He had the unmatched combination of problem identification instincts and ability to use his engineering and management learning to develop solutions.

There are other instances of his simplicity. His marriage to Durga was a simple ceremony. It was a very sensible act of avoiding excessive and vulgar spending on an event, which needs emulation by youngsters today! Manoharan was a person who believed that vulgar and unwarranted expression of wealth in

situations in life is sinful. Though many development activists share this belief, there is often a large gap between thought and action. Obviously, practical demonstrations of inner principles in personal life situations are what can really be appreciable.

After I got married, my wife and I visited his home at Trichy to see his parents. I could relate Manoharan’s life style to his parents’ upbringing and the encouragement they gave him to exercise complete freedom in thinking issues out, rather than being emotional about them.

Manoharan had simple expectations in money matters. He had worked at the Market Intervention Operations scheme for edible oil in India when NDDB started it. I used to wonder about his masterly analytical skills and his ability to apply them to the cooperative sector. What was most interesting was his commitment to work for the co-operative sector. Had money lured him, he could have moved to the private sector in Mumbai, working for MNCs dealing in edible oil. In many discussions with me, he and his colleagues had profusely resisted even entertaining such a thought.

Some of us get attracted to the development sector when we look professionals working with institutions

such as World Bank and ADB, which are big names in development sector funding. I could see in Manoharan a commitment to the development sector and a sense of pride in bring about positive change through small and meaningful actions. To him, life was meaningful when you could make someone feel better! He did just that, and incidentally, he made a decent living out of it! If I do a valuation of his pecuniary opportunity losses, it would result in very high figures! What he really achieved, however, is hugely intangible. Hopefully, many more Manoharans will arise in the future. Sheer simplicity and commitment to purpose were the mantras behind his success in sustaining interest in developmental work.

After the tragic demise of a friend, Manoharan was deeply disturbed and wanted to work for tribal development. I was not sure why he was adamant, though he did give me the feeling that it was a call of conscience. Believe me, it was more than that! After a stint at Rashtriya Vriksha Mitra Sahyog of Anand, Manoharan joined Girijan Co-operative Corporation Ltd (GCC) at Andhra Pradesh. GCC was located in Bothili, Vizianagaram Tehsil at Vizianagaram District. He used to travel almost overnight from Vizag to this hilly place by bus. I understand it to be a scenic

and beautiful place where he fell in love with the place and the people. For a person to move from Trichy to Anand and from there to a remote hilly small village was a big shift. I was wondering whether he would shift out of Bothili at some point in time! Such was his love and dedication for tribal development.

For most of us then, it felt like a weird decision, simply because we could not see comprehend the way he looked at life. We think of life from a very materialistic viewpoint. Here was a man at the peak of his life, full of energy and dedication, who had decided to work in a serene and differently resourced location. In heart and mind, he was looking at facilitating the creation of economic value and peace for society. In the hierarchy of professional and monetary choices, education guides choices between long-term self-interest options. To emulate Manoharan, one needs a childlike heart and the ability to render truly unblemished service to the downtrodden! What one needs is a blend of simplicity, professional education, determination to create meaningful services that open the doors to decent living with pride, and peace within the self.

I regularly corresponded with Manoharan. I liked writing to him mainly to enjoy the pleasure of reading his replies.



He had an amazing handwriting and excellent command over the English and Tamil languages. I loved his Tamil a great deal. I knew that he was in a place without adequate electricity. It was a hilly region that had no clean water source. I used to ask him why he wanted to live like this. He responded that people there loved him a lot, and it made him feel so good. In fact, he once went on a “sathyagraha” for four days to make men there more responsible towards their families and to get them to follow healthy habits like avoiding alcohol. I have seen such things on the silver screen and have read extensively about Gandhi! I am a great lover of Gandhian philosophy. I can relate proudly that Manoharan demonstrated the same Gandhian principles for the cause of the betterment of tribal humans. When I understood this, I thought God has been kind to someone doing some soul searching! However, my question to God now is: why were you so unkind to such a great soul?

After a few years of professional engagement with the Girijan Cooperatives at Bothili, Manoharan shifted to Gudalur to work for a NGO. Once again, he was leading a project for tribal area development. His wife was also working with the project. Their joint commitment was so high that their good work continued even after the arrival of his daughter, Vennila.

His team involvement and understanding was well depicted by one of his colleagues as follows: “He was our friend, mentor, guide and teacher. He held us all together for 16 years with his tireless commitment, and hard work.” I used to be amazed by his unassuming ability to carry on with people for fulfilling tasks and willingness to reach out for any action at the ground. This would come only out of dedication to cause and not through education or training.

Manoharan loved music. He favored light, soothing and meaningful songs with powerful lyrics. I remember him adoring songs sung by S P Balasubramaniam and composed by Ilaiyaraaja. Many of us attracted to music. Manoharan, however, was one person who could lighten his mood and his soul with music, which enabled him to achieve peace in life. I had

a few conversations with him when he indulgently talked about songs and how he related to them. In his later years, he lamented the way the taste of youth had changed. He compared old songs with contemporary ones, pinpointing the changes that were at times not in good taste. These comparisons made me think of how much this person was sensitive to social factors, and how he related the influence of music to building character. I belong to his school of thought and sincerely feel that music can impact society both positively and adversely. It is the collective responsibility of society to keep the social fabric in the right condition! Good Samaritans like Manoharan may rest assured that their messages will be well received.

Manoharan was a person who always lent his support to a good cause. One of my friends wanted an Indian-born Australian girl to gain exposure to Indian culture and

life. I do think her voluntary internship became more meaningful because of her stint at Gudalur with Manoharan. Such was the impact of Manoharan’s personality!

The other occasion when I observed his personality was at Gudalur in August 2007. I saw him after a gap of several years. Prabha and I were on a holiday in Ooty. I called up Manoharan and told him we would like to spend the next day with him and his family. We were especially interested in meeting his little daughter Vennila. He welcomed me immediately, but advised me that we should join him for lunch and stay for some time thereafter, since Vennila returned from school at around 2 pm.

We were there well ahead of time. He received us near his office at Gudalur and took us to his home. We had a great lunch and a fantastic time catching on with our Anand times and the days since then.

“Money is a medium of exchange. The true treasure is devoting yourself for the well-being of the society around you”.

rural living, and to build character through a meaningful internship. Naturally, since her family was in Australia, they were seeking security, proper guidance and a liberal learning opportunity for her. This was a dichotomous situation where they wanted safety and protection as well as a liberal setting. I could only think of Manoharan and Durga, and wrote to them. I got a quick welcome note from Manoharan, in which he was nice enough to offer the girl internship at Gudalur. He then arranged for her stay along with his own family.

On their return, the girl and her mother were profuse in their thanks for the hospitality shown by Manoharan and his family. More important, the girl was taken aback by the kind of work they were doing, and she told me, “Money is a medium of exchange. The true treasure is devoting yourself for the well-being of the society around you.” I do not know how much she was able to emulate Manoharan later in her

Though Gudalur looked to me well developed compared to what I heard of Bothilli, his home was close to a grove of trees. He was pained to note my ignorance of nature and explained how reptiles and leeches are least harmful compared to human predators in the concrete jungles. Reptiles and leeches leave us alone if we leave them alone. I can understand someone born in a tribal area considering it normal to be around nature, but I was amused by the way my friend had adapted himself to nature!

During the short time I was with him, I observed his happiness at having built his own house in Gudalur. As I have noted previously, he was not into wealth creation. He believed money would be adequately available if one does good work. Wealth had never lured him. His view on building his own house was family oriented. Most of us in the development sector understand that family values are ingrained even when we work

for a larger society. Only when the family’s fair requirements are taken care of is such commitment to society possible. Here, I could see a perfect family man.

It showed in his love for his daughter Vennila! He was a proud father like so many of us are. I could see in Manoharan’s abundant love for his daughter Vennila and his pride in her made me understand his love for his child and his family. I could then see in Manoharan the traditional carving for and pleasure in sharing with the family. I could see that you can feel content in a life with meaning, without having to chase money and professional achievements. Manoharan and some other such souls have made me realize just how love one has for a daughter. That one day I spent with him has impacted me for the rest of my life. Manoharan is living in my heart and in my mind. It is like his own love for tribals, which needs to be experienced and cherished. Many cannot understand the sentiment and give it meaning without experiencing it! I do know that lots of downtrodden folk look up to Manoharan to give completeness to their lives.

I would love to write more about him, but I need to close this article, and I will do so quoting one mail communication I received from him after he fell sick. We had been discussing the hospital project that was on going in Gudalur. I had asked him to provide me with details like the project cost and gaps in funding gap. He wrote back to me saying that good souls must give by participating, rather than by fulfilling material requirements from a distance. A number of good-hearted souls were around to help materially, but the pleasure of participation was paramount. I had the pleasure of knowing Manoharan and cherishing his simplicity, commitment, intellect, humanity and love for self and everyone else. If God would create more such people, there would be no lack of humanity in this world!

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

Editorial

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INITIATIVE AND MANAGEMENT



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

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

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CSIM also facilitates Social Audit for social enterprises through Social Audit Network, UK and SAN, India.
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Education For All



Stories of social entrepreneurs are not new. Neither are such stories rare today. There are however only a few social entrepreneurs who can derive true inspiration for the path they choose. Sasikumar Thangamuthu is one of them, and educating the underprivileged was a path that he was truly inspired to take while he was still in college. In fact, when he was an undergrad student at the PSNA College of Engineering and Technology back in 2009, Sasikumar developed a spirit for volunteerism. As a member of his college's Rotaract club (he would later go on to become Vice-President), Sasikumar realized that he was quite passionate about volunteerism. That was also why when he graduated the same year, he decided that he would mould his career also in the same path. In many ways, that led to the formation of Our Home, an NGO that he runs today which focusses primarily on education for all. "We often witness how most orphanages don't quite have the right wherewithal to educate their wards, while in schools it's quite the opposite," says Sasikumar. "When I began Our Home, our primary aim was to address that situation. Our aim still remains 'education for all'." As he explains, the name 'Our Home' itself remains symbolic of the kind of care and belonging that the NGO wished to inspire in those children it would go on to teach and educate.

In fact, when Sasikumar began the NGO back in 2009, he did it all by himself. "I approached a few fellow-members of the Rotaract club, who promised to provide adequate support," he says, recalling his journey to founding the NGO. In the last six years, the NGO has more than established itself as a key player in providing proper educational support to children across orphanages in Chennai and Dindigul. "We've tied up with close to eight orphanages in Chennai and three in Dindigul," says Sasikumar. He continues: "In the last few years we've managed to mobilize a great deal of activity in educating the children we've come into contact with." Our Home's focus was broadly, on two types of children who were in need of education: visually challenged children and autistic children. A great degree of the NGO's success owed itself to special teams of volunteers that were set up to handle each of these groups. "We have separate teams of volunteers who handle children with different educational needs. Our volunteers are well-equipped to handle these cases, and have done a great job in their limited time here," recounts Sasikumar.

The last six years have also seen Our Home's success move beyond merely educating children in orphanages. During this period, volunteers at the NGO have also done their bit in successfully encouraging a spirit of volunteerism among colleges. "Due credit for that has to go our initiative 'Why

Should I Care', which has aimed to get students in colleges to go out and volunteer," says Sasikumar. As part of the initiative, volunteers at Our Home visit colleges and orient students about the importance of lending a helping hand to society, on the education front. "In fact, our members successfully completed one of these sessions at Kodaikanal Christian College, and the students they helped orient have even managed to begin educating the tribal population in the surrounding forests," he says. It was this initiative, which won Our Home, the Best Outstanding Project award instituted by Cognizant. During this period, the NGO also successfully adopted a village near Mahabalipuram, introducing them to education and creating the right kind of exposure for its inhabitants.

While the story of how a college graduate began doing his bit for society is in itself an inspiration, Sasikumar says that going about setting up his NGO was a bit of a challenge. "I did not quite know how to go about doing what I wanted to do in terms of starting the NGO," he says, recounting his formative days. "But we've managed to meet most expectations in the last six years. In fact, we formally registered ourselves in 2012." He continues: "We've also received the right kind of help in many ways. One of our well-wishers, Dr John, who runs a clinic for specially-abled children, provided a great deal of help when we approached him on means to educate children with special abilities." In fact, by his own admission, education of special children is one of the more challenging areas of the NGO's activities. "Autistic children need special care and attention. You can't treat them like other children and you have got to be a little watchful about the kind of contact you make with them."

Going the extra mile, the NGO has also launched yet another initiative, MOVE which stands for 'Make One Volunteer Everywhere'. "It's a pre-placement programme, where outgoing students of a college are oriented about the importance of volunteerism, and are thus encouraged to volunteer and join social-service activities at their workplace. That way, we can help spread the importance of volunteerism beyond the college campus and into the workplace."

As far as the future goes, Sasikumar has his priorities clear. "Our aim is to teach students to read, write and speak at least in one language," he says, elaborating on the road ahead, for Our Home. That apart, the broader objective, he explains, is to fully educate every child the NGO takes under its fold. Hopefully, the quest to educate and teach India's lesser-fortunate might have some light at the end of the tunnel with initiatives like Sasikumar's slowly but surely growing in strength and numbers.



Goodbye taxis, 'ola cabs!

Olacabs aims to foster entrepreneurship among drivers and operators through its aggregation business model and in turn, make transportation economical and efficient for customers in India

Post an unpleasant experience or two with local cab services, Bhavish Aggarwal and Ankit Bhati were not the sort to chalk it up to bad karma. The duo saw a market opportunity in this highly fragmented space, which could change the way Indians viewed taxi rides. Interestingly, unlike other service providers in this industry, the founders of Olacabs, pioneered an aggregation-based business model to bring about a structure. "We don't own a single car. Every car that we have in the Ola fleet is owned by a micro-entrepreneur, a driver or an operator. Ola is merely a technology platform that enables operators to generate additional revenue streams, and at the same time delivers good customer experience," says Aggarwal.

"While businesses take time to deliver results, a strong proof of concept with an evident acceptance from a critical mass of customers is important to have. Once this is in place, both the entrepreneur and the investors will be confident about the business.

Aggarwal and Bhati, both graduates from IIT-Bombay, founded Olacabs in January 2011 and put in their own savings to kick-start the business. Initially, the challenge was not in customer adoption, because the model was developed with a heavy focus on customer experience. Rather, it was in convincing the independent taxi owners and drivers to come on board Ola. "While we started as an additional source of business to the cab operators, today, we have become their primary source of revenue, with their own business becoming a top-up," notes Aggarwal. Ola currently has a presence in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Pune, Chennai and Goa and has a team size of over 500 people. As of today, it has partnered with over 4,500 operators and has over 8,000 cabs in its fleet.

According to the founders, currently, Olacabs gets over 15,000 requests a day, a third of which comes from its iPhone and Android app. "At Ola, the customer experience is carried forward until a customer reaches his/her destination. At the end of the day, they expect a fuller consumption cycle and that is what we are trying to deliver," says Aggarwal. The company provides point-to-point services within cities, hourly cab rentals and undertakes bookings for outstation travel. It works on a revenue sharing model with the operators, where, depending on the category and size of the operator, the latter will pay 10 per cent to 20 per cent of each transaction value to Olacabs.

In April 2012, the company raised a Series A to the tune of US \$5 million, from Tiger Global Management and subsequently, in November 2013, it raised a Series B to the tune of US \$20 million from Matrix India Partners and existing



investor, Tiger Global Management. "The latest round of funding will help us expand into the next circle of cities, which includes a few non-metros and Tier-II cities," states Aggarwal. He adds that the company will also be investing in technology to support its data analytics division, which will enhance customer experience and help drivers plan their inventory better. In fact, the company is also in the process of helping other stakeholders (such as the Government and public at large) benefit from Olacabs' traffic heat-maps and pothole detection mechanisms.

Making all the difference

Aggarwal indicates that an Ola driver can never refuse service to a customer. "When the driver wants to take a break, he has the freedom to turn off the GPS tracker. But, once the booking is made, he cannot back-out," says the first-time entrepreneur. Similarly, Ola, as a policy, does not ask where a customer wants to get dropped. "Be it 100 meters or 100 kilometers, our goal is to ensure that the customer's journey from point A to point B is an experience by itself, and has nothing to do with how far he/she is travelling," he reasons.

To help maintain its service quality, the company has put in place quite a few criteria to bring an operator or driver on board. As a first, the Olacabs team holds an

operational and functional level audit to assess if the car is worthy of being on the road. Secondly, it holds a training session for the drivers, to bring them up to its standards. Thirdly, the Ola team conducts planned and surprise audits from time-to-time, to ensure that the service is being delivered as per the company's expectations.

Overcoming challenges

Today, the car rental industry in India is pegged to be at US \$6 billion, growing by 20 per cent annually. While this presents a huge opportunity for companies such as Olacabs to grow in this space, it is also fraught with regulatory and infrastructural challenges. "As a first, there is no policy framework around the market. We more or less created the market and that leaves us with the responsibility of setting a high benchmark," indicates Aggarwal. Secondly, given that Ola relies largely on mobile and Internet data to deliver customer experience and process transactions, connectivity poses a challenge at certain locations across cities. To tackle this, the company is in the process of developing alternate devices that are less reliant on mobile and Internet data. The third challenge lies in the lack of proper road infrastructure and connectivity. "We don't have a good mapping system in place, so we have to rely on Google maps," says

Aggarwal.

Like any other startup, Olacabs builds its brand presence by interacting with its customers on social media and advertising on radio and other mass media. The company, however, focuses most of its energy on the customer and its branding activities are accelerated only when they launch in a new city.

In the next five years, Olacabs is looking to create a presence in 10 to 12 metro and Tier-II cities and make transportation economical, efficient and effortless for everyone. "In all, our goal is to empower the operators as entrepreneurs and hence deliver great customer value," says Aggarwal as he signs off.

What Olacabs has in store for its customers?

Ola Mini, a series of hatch-back cars, with a base fare of Rs. 100 for the first six km and Rs. 13 per additional km.

The sedan series, with a base fare of Rs. 200 for the first eight km and Rs. 18 for each additional km.

Ola Luxury is priced at Rs. 250 for the first two km and Rs. 20 for each additional km.

Best Practices To Build Customer Satisfaction In A Service-Oriented Business

As told by Bhavish Aggarwal

Understand the pain point: In our case, while a customer expected a great cab experience, we went one step further, integrated technology at every level and innovated the on-touch booking experience through our mobile application.

Put the customer first: Ensure that the customer is at the centre of every initiative and his/her experience is delivered to the best of your ability.

Offer a seamless experience: From the time a customer reaches out to you till he receives his invoice, makes the payment and shares feedback, the experience should be seamless. For us, consistency in communication across our web, SMS and e-mail applications helps us achieve this.

Take care of your other stakeholders: In our case, the drivers and operators are our stakeholders and they play a critical role in determining the overall experience. Our vision of creating micro entrepreneurs in the driver community and enabling business for them goes a long way in our customer experience.

Always action feedback: Slip-ups will happen occasionally. Be quick to accept, resolve and ensure it never repeats again.

— **Madhumita Prabhakar**
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(www.thesmartceo.in)



Lighting the Urban Slums

One fourth of the Indian population is said to be lacking access to electricity. Provision of electricity can be a daunting task and challenges multiply if one has to electrify rural and urban slums. Pollinate Energy, a social business enterprise that was initiated in Bangalore has used a unique model to electrify urban slums through solar lamps.

Initiated by a group of six friends in Australia, Pollinate Energy aims to promote access to sustainable energy solutions to communities that have been ridden with 'energy poverty'. One of the founders, did her research on 'Access to Energy in Low Income Communities in India'. Further examination of stakeholders in Bangalore and the processes involved in this front helped her realise that urban slum communities were growing huge and could hardly access any form of energy, especially electricity. As these communities were not recognised by the local authorities, and also lacked access to micro finance, or ration cards their energy needs was therefore never a priority for the local authorities. Pollinate Energy is now operating as a social enterprise for three years in Bangalore, and has reached self-sustainability. "We can now plan for our expansion," quips Mr Pascal Meline, City Co-founder of Pollinate Energy in Hyderabad. Selling solar lighting systems through their 'pollinators' has proven to be a very successful model, allowing them to build on this strength. "That is precisely the advantage of a social enterprise. We can reach more urban communities by adapting the model," says Pascal.

Pollinate Energy aims to make lives better by helping people access sustainable products. Children who were not able to study in the evenings are now able to spend longer hours on study and families are able to spend more time on their vocation. "Mothers no longer have to cut short their work timings to be able to cook when there is sun light. Accessing electricity has changed their lives for the better", asserts Pascal.

Hyderabad has been the first city where Pollinate Energy chose to expand, after Bangalore. Hyderabad's success will allow Pollinate Energy to validate an expansion model that can drive growth, only in the interest of self-sustainability.

Pascal started as a volunteer in Hyderabad to set up Pollinate Energy operations in the city. Pollinate Energy runs the Young Professionals Programme every two months to invite ten international volunteers and five Indian fellows to join in their efforts in setting up operations in a new city.

"We have just arrived in Hyderabad. Our main strength is the manpower our volunteers provide. They undergo simultaneous workshops that allow them to see the opportunities in the development sector. In the field of sustainable energy, the number of households and communities that lack access to energy presents a huge business opportunity," explains Pascal. Volunteers are trained and engaged in identifying potential communities that can benefit from this initiative. They map communities based on their energy needs and present access to let the group decide if they can begin operations in that community.

Once the clientele communities are identified, Pollinate Energy's team establishes a network of local stakeholders who are then trained to become local staff. Once the local team is completely prepared to take over operations and maintenance, the volunteer programme is annulled and they move to set up base in another city to focus on addressing the issue of energy poverty there. "We are hoping and optimistic to see Hyderabad become self-sustainable in October 2015," says Pascal. Interestingly, volunteers are also required to raise funds in the city where they work. Every international volunteer raises \$2500 to \$3500 during the year. Pollinate Energy was initially supported by funds raised by the founders.

Solar lights from Greenlight Planet is the product that is now being promoted. This model has been very successful in

Africa and Asia, and has been adapted to suit the tough living conditions in India's urban poor communities. Pollinate Energy has plans to diversify, looking at the options of introducing water filters and efficient cook stoves that can ease



Pollinators' engagement in the field and their levels of service builds trust in the communities, which ultimately leads to the enterprise's success

the energy burden of communities who have traditionally depended on non-renewable resources. "We also have plans to introduce menstruation cups for women, but that would also require educating women and communities, which is a bigger challenge," he says.

Pollinate Energy's strength lies in its distribution model that is survived by

members from the local communities. Representatives from the communities who have high school level qualification are trained to become micro entrepreneurs. Along with the training they are also provided with a 'business bag' that comprises of transport allowances, guidelines on how to maintain relationship with community members, provide on time services for product maintenance, and introduce and sell the product. These micro entrepreneurs are rightly called the 'pollinators' as they are the point of contact between Pollinate Energy and the communities—and presenting the services at their doorstep.

"The pollinators are also provided a smart phone with a pre-loaded application that allows pollinators to track payment made by the clients. The payment for the products purchased are recovered from the clients in the form of weekly installments (maximum 5 weeks) and the funds are deposited by the pollinators in a common bank account," elaborates Pascal, who also opines that only this can make sustainable energy accessible to low income communities.

Pollinators' engagement in the field and their levels of service builds trust in the communities, which ultimately leads to the enterprise's success. As Pascal puts it, "This is what NGOs lack as they cannot pool in manpower at this scale. This is the strength of a social business enterprise that engages local communities in its process of expansion."

With a mission to provide access to sustainable energy to urban slums by creating a cadre of micro entrepreneurs from and within the communities, Pollinate Energy follows the strategy of investing its profits in research and expansion in order to be able to reach out to more communities who are in need of a stable source of energy.

Long way to go, but with a promising model!

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

Mr. Ranganathan, I. C. S.: In Srimad Bhagavad Gita there is a passage: One's own *dharma* is the best; an alien *dharma* is full of risks. What is the significance of one's own *dharma*?

M.: It is usually interpreted to mean the duties of the orders and of the different castes. The physical environment must also be taken into consideration.

D.: If *varnasrama dharma* be meant, such *dharma* prevails only in India. On the other hand the Gita should be universally applicable.

M.: There is *varnasrama* in some form or other in every land. The significance is that one should hold on to the single *Atman* and not swerve therefrom. That is the whole gist of it. *sva* = one's own, i.e.,

of the Self, of the *Atman*; *para* = the other's, i.e., of the non-self, of the *anatma*. *Atma Dharma* is inherence in the Self. There will be no distraction and no fear. Troubles arise only when there is a second to oneself. If the *Atman* be realised to be only unitary, there is no second and therefore no cause for fear. The man, as he is now, confounds the *anatma* (non-Self) *dharma* with *atma* (the Self) *dharma* and suffers.

Let him know the Self and abide in it; there is an end of fear, and there are no doubts.

Even if interpreted as *varnasrama dharma* the significance is only this much. Such *dharma* bears fruit only when done selflessly. That is, one must realise that he is not the doer, but that he is only a tool of some Higher Power. Let the

Higher Power do what is inevitable and let me act only according to its dictates. The actions are not mine. Therefore the result of the actions cannot be mine. If one thinks and acts so, where is the trouble? Be it *varnasrama dharma* or *lokika dharma* (worldly activities), it is immaterial. Finally, it amounts to this: *sva* = *atmanah* (of the Self) *para* = *anaatmanah* (of the non-self). Such doubts are natural. The orthodox interpretation cannot be reconciled with the life of a modern man obliged to work for his livelihood in different capacities.

A man from Pondy interposed: *Sarva dharmaan parityajya maamekam saranam vraja* (leaving all duties surrender to me only).
Sri Bhagavan: (All) *Sarva*

is only *anaatmanah* (of the non-self); the emphasis is on *ekam* (only). To the man who has strong hold of the *eka* (one) where are the *dharmas*? It means, "Be sunk in the Self."

D.: The Gita was taught for action.

M.: What does the Gita say? Arjuna refused to fight. Krishna said, "So long as you refuse to fight, you have the sense of doership. Who are you to refrain or to act? Give up the notion of doership. Until that sense disappears you are bound to act. You are being manipulated by a Higher Power. You are admitting it by your own refusal to submit to it. Instead recognise the Power and submit as a tool. (Or to put it differently), if you refuse you will be forcibly drawn into it.

Instead of being an unwilling worker, be a willing one.

"Rather, be fixed in the Self and act according to nature without the thought of doership. Then the results of action will not affect you. That is manliness and heroism."

Thus, 'inherence in the Self' is the sum and substance of Gita teaching. Finally, the Master Himself added, "If a man be established in the Self these doubts would not arise. They arise only until he is established there."

D.: Then of what use is such reply to the enquirer?

M.: The words still have force and will surely operate in due course.

—Excerpted from talks with Shri Ramana Maharishi

Performance and Cultural Excellence - hand in hand

Business Process Categories Requirements

In a social organization, one of the initial exercises that happens which is also relatively easy is building the purpose and vision of the organization. Many a time the organization is born because there are a group of like-minded people who come together or a single individual willing to stand at the edge and question things that have been taken for granted. When the intent or the question becomes strong, in order to get into action and create some transformations, an organization is formed. So putting the idea onto a vision-path is fairly easy.

The next difficult part is to decide on the values that will guide the actions to achieve the vision. With appropriate clarification process combined with articulation and reflection would enable identification of beliefs. Further to identification restrictive parts of the belief can be sifted and facilitative beliefs can be formed that till help to journey on the path of vision.

The toughest part comes when this vision has to be translated into a consistent series of actions. These actions require appropriate processes and systems to ensure smooth and fruitful action. Processes would relate to business, technical, financial and people management that would help run, govern, enable and equip an organization to function and get the best out of the least.

It is important for Leadership to marry Business process and Organizational vision and values at the core level. They have to look into some of the critical processes that directly impact the efficiency and sustenance of the social organization.

These processes connect end to end of an enterprise, with many inter-linkages, inter-dependencies and enablers. These processes relate to -

1. Business Direction with clear connection to Vision & Strategy - What to do what, when and where
2. Business Value System connected to Values and beliefs- how would you want to achieve the vision
3. Design, Develop and Create best in class products or services that is in line with the vision and values
4. Human capital related processes - Hiring, staffing, administration, development & related data management - People intelligence
5. Manage every product portfolio or service delivery - with its independent streams
6. Ensure products / services are made available to users - where, when and how they want
7. Build and manage infrastructure to delivery and manage products/ services - Technology, logistics, administration
8. Handle all customers / users / stakeholders - queries, needs, expectations, delivery expectations
9. Manage Financial resources
10. Manage all Assets- Infrastructure, machine, material, products
11. Manage enterprise risk, compliances and governance- Statutory, business, people, environment and related aspects
12. Manage all relationship aspects- stakeholders, shareholder, legal, public relations & society at large
13. Develop and build business

capabilities- Business acumen, projects, quality, change, knowledge management, benchmarking, environment safety & health

14. Business analytics- Metrics, measurements, reports, tracking and intelligence for better decision making

These 14 are considered as categories and each would have different process groups, which in turn will have process steps followed by activities and tasks. In a social organization many a time these activities are looked at activity and task level. Any issues that erupt in any of these categories are handled as a problem solving situation. So again and again in different categories different problems may emerge and it becomes a continuous fire-fighting situation. With resources being low and shoe string budget aiming to reach out for spaces where not many are reaching out to easily, the firefighting can take away a lot of energy and time. When these activities and tasks are bucketed and categorized properly and processes are developed so that there is clarity in why do we do what we do, who does what, when things happen and ultimately know all the 5 W and 1 H - What, Why, When, Where, Who & How then to a large extent the firefighting can be avoided.

The above list is not limited to a social organization and is generally applicable to any setup be it in small, medium or large enterprise - be in government or non-government, social or for profit. These are the fundamental requirements to ensure what we set to achieve are well laid out to achieve in the best possible way. As a social entrepreneur, there is a strong need

to be aware and be in control of everything that happens in the entity. First requirement is to know what all need to be done and then track, monitor, develop, and improve what is being done on a continual basis.

In a social organization where the funds and infrastructure are limited, instituting the process has been a challenging affair. While attracting the right talent has been tough, also dedicated resources are not available. While there is vision and passion, the processes that will ensure we get the best out of resources leading to better revenue, cash flow, compliances and evaluation has taken a back seat. With the CSR demanding a high level of compliance and speed of action from the social organizations, well defined process and system needs to be followed to ensure consistent reach out. A good intention with proper process ensures efficiency.

In the articles continued over a period of next few months each of these processes would be addressed independently.

Reflect:

- To what extent am I engaged in fire-fighting in my organization?
- What is the extent to which my day to day activities and tasks bucketed in proper Business Process categories?
- Which processes are well laid out in my organization with regard to Business process?
- This is the second article in the series 'Performance and Cultural Excellence - hand in hand'

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath and Prathaap B

A school for girls

Pataalkot: The government school in Chintipur, one of the most accessible villages of Pataalkot, has a primary and a middle section. Fifty four students are enrolled in it at present. There are three teachers and a headmaster.

According to Shashwati Bharati, the primary school teacher, there used to be more students in the Chintipur school before the other villages deeper down in the valley got their own schools.

Daya Bai, a social activist who works in the Chhindwara district, said that there are primary schools in almost all of the 12 villages in Pataalkot and a middle school in every third or fourth village. However, there are no high schools or higher secondary schools in the valley and students who want to study further have to step out of Pataalkot to find higher quality educational facilities. While boys do go to study in Tamia or Parasia, girls find it harder to move out of the village.

In fact, Shashwati Bharati is the only one from Chintipur to have sent her four girls to Chhindwara, Indore and Jabalpur for higher education. After volunteering at the Anganwadi, she was promoted to the post of primary school teacher in 2008 with Rs. 5,000 fixed salary.

Brujal Bharati, a Lower Division Clerk at Chhindwara Collectorate and a native of



neighbouring Rated village, said that “The girls have to rent rooms in Tamia to study.” This is due to the fact that the hostels in Tamia and elsewhere have limited number of seats which are allotted to meritorious students only.

Renting a room, however, requires a lot of money, which often means that the poor farmers cannot afford them. Census 2011 pegs the effective female literacy rate of Chhindwara at 86.10 per cent. However, this percentage would be much less if the

number of people with minimum ten years of schooling is calculated.

This is the reason the government has devised many schemes to promote education amongst tribal girls. Chief amongst them is the Kanya Saksharta Protsahan Yojna which is aimed at reducing dropout rates among tribal girl children. Under the scheme, tribal girls who move from primary to middle school are given Rs. 500, girls who further move on to class 9 are given Rs. 1,000 and Rs.

2,000 is given to girls who go to class 11.

According to the Assistant Commissioner for Tribal Welfare N. S. Barkade, there are several schemes for promoting higher education amongst the tribal students as well. For instance, the state bears the cost of Rs 1.5 lakhs for UPSC tuitions for students from Scheduled Tribes.

Madhya Pradesh government also gives a scholarship of Rs. 14 lakhs to 25 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students for studying in foreign universities. However, such schemes are hardly availed of by the people who need it because of the lack of awareness surrounding them.

At present, three of the four students who have received the scholarship for studying abroad are girls. However, local journalists Vinod Chauria and Manish Gadkari claim that the girls are either related to people in power or are the children of government officials, hence why they have received the full benefits of the schemes.

“No one from the grass roots level receives such benefits,” said Manish Gadkari, a senior reporter from Hari Bhoomi.

—Anonna Dutt
Asian College of Journalism

Drinking water problem? No worries!

BEST AQUA ENTERPRISES

Solution in Purification - REVERSE OSMOSIS (RO) SYSTEM

Comparison of Reverse Osmosis System Vs Other Conventional Purifiers

Contamination (Likely Caused Disease)	Impurities / Chemicals Removing Capability of Different Processes				
	Activated Carbon	Ozonation	Boiling	U.V.Ray	Reverse Osmosis
1.Sodium (Blood Pressure)	x	x	x	x	Yes
2.Calcium (Kidney Stones)	x	x	x	x	Yes
3.Magnesium (Kidney Stones)	x	x	x	x	Yes
4.Lead (Mental Sickness)	x	x	x	x	Yes
5.Copper (Indigestion)	x	x	x	x	Yes
6.Mercury (Pain)	x	x	x	x	Yes
7.Nitrate (Dysentery)	x	x	x	x	Yes
8.Bacteria (Bacterial Disease)	x	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9.Pyrogen (Fever)	x	x	x	x	Yes
10.Virus (Viral Diseases)	x	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11.Fluoride (Bone Weakness)	x	x	x	x	Yes
12.Arsenic (Poisoning)	x	x	x	x	Yes
• Remove Poisinous / infesous germs and give a safe drinking water Makes Salts water to safe drinking water.					
• Minimum Cost (Cost per lit 12 Paise only)					
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“In 2001 LIBA was ranked 54th, and in 2004 it ranked 9th. This was purely my achievement and am proud of that!”

Rev. Fr. Casimir Raj shares with Marie Banu his efforts to launch LIBA and his passion for Servant Leadership.

Rev. Fr. Casimir Raj has been associated with education and teaching marketing for the past three decades in various institutions including XLRI Jamshedpur; St. Louis University, Missouri; Wheeling Jesuit College, Wheeling and XIM Bhubaneswar. He was the founder Director of LIBA and Principal of Loyola College, Chennai. He was also Director, XIM Bhubaneswar, and XLRI Jamshedpur, Goa Institute of Management. A member of the American Marketing Association and a PhD from St. Louis University, (in Missouri, USA), Fr. Casimir is widely regarded to be authority in marketing with numerous publications to his credit.

Rev. Fr. Casimir Raj, S.J., as Principal, made the almost impossible as possible. Co-education was introduced only in his period. He has left his mark on the college particularly by starting LIBA (Loyola Institute for business Administration). It was declared, by a Central Government Commission, the best of its kind in Tamil Nadu.

Consistently ranked among the best business schools in the country, LIBA represents the unflagging zeal for education that is a unique characteristic of the Jesuit Society. LIBA is a Jesuit institution under the aegis of Loyola College Society, Chennai.

In an exclusive interview, Rev. Fr. Casimir Raj shares with Marie Banu his efforts to launch LIBA and his passion for Servant Leadership.

Can you share with us about your childhood, family, and education?

I hail from Souryarpatnam Village in Ramnad District, Tamil Nadu. We were only 60 families living here and did not have access to roads, electricity and water. My father was an elementary school teacher while my mother could not read or write. In fact, I tried my best to teach her to sign, but she did not want to learn. She has been a great inspiration and I have learnt a lot from her. My father was a dynamic man and I learnt discipline from him.

In my village, I am the first person to pursue studies beyond tenth standard. I have four brothers and one sister who are now living in different places.

At the age of 18 I joined the Jesuit order. I studied B.Com and M.Com at Loyola College in Chennai. During my entire study period, I did not refer to any guides. Instead, I reflected on what the professors taught me during class and I made my own notes.

While pursuing my M.Com, I bought Ramayya's book on Income Tax and read every case. This gave me better knowledge and it became one of my strengths.

While studying Philosophy and Theology, I became interested in Management studies. My superiors noticed me reading management books and encouraged me to pursue MBA in Santa Clara University, U.S.A.

About your efforts to launch LIBA and what makes this institution different from others?

During my studies, I used to spend my vacation at XLRI, most of the time reading books, and interacting with the professors. My dream was to have an institution like XLRI in South India. While XLRI did not give preference to Catholics, I wanted to make a difference by offering more admissions to Catholics. I also wanted the Chennai institution to be better than XLRI in 20 years' time.

To tell you very frankly, I am proud of

starting LIBA, but am more proud of what I have done later. When I returned as Director in 2001, classes were conducted from 9am to 1pm and it was just like any other College. The day I came, I told the management and students that the classes would be henceforth conducted from 8am to 8pm and in due course this programme would be made residential. I gave full power to the faculty members to set the papers and value them. I even took classes for the faculty on various ways of grading and taught them various models.

It was practically a Madras University based MBA and nobody knew about it. In 2001, LIBA was ranked 54th and in 2004 it ranked 9th. This was purely my achievement and am proud of that! The teachers and students cooperated with me, and there was no improvement in the infrastructure. From that day, LIBA has taken a different path and is well known across the globe.

What are the ways in which you inculcate values and ethics in your students during their study period?

We teach our students values and ethics and make them experience it as well.

During the first year, we have a paper called 'Government and Society' where we teach social analysis. We also take the students on a three-day village visit to experience rural life.

I encourage my alumni to sponsor at least one poor village student in a

year which would cost only 2500 rupees for a year. I also tell them not to expect anything in return, not even an IT Exemption for the donation they have offered.

Triple bottom line reporting and Social Accounting and Audit will strengthen the reporting systems in corporates for their CSR programme. Will LIBA look at incorporating these in the syllabus?

It is a pity that we are making CSR compulsory for companies. They are making a lot of money and they are now being forced to give two percent for social work. Even now, some companies are claiming from their beneficiary organization tax exemption for the contribution they have made.

We would like to have one course on Good Governance. One of my friends has made a donation to make this happen and we are working on the proposals.

We would also have a course in CSR and certainly Social Accounting and Audit will form part of this.

You have been following the principles of Servant Leadership and have mentioned that marketing concepts should imbibe values from this. Can you please elaborate?

Since the day I joined Loyola in 1975, I was involved in administration. Whatever role was offered to me, I did not consider it as a dominant or powerful position. For me, it was service to the people. When I was the Hostel Warden, I used to spend all my time with the students. I kept all my room windows and doors open and encouraged the students to meet me whenever they wanted to. I was an open book and my students loved me for that.

Whenever I was made a Principal or Director, I used to tell my staff and students that I do not want to be known as a best administrator, but instead as a just and humane person.

For me, marketing was not selling, but rather finding out what the needs of the people are and providing them with it. We need to first listen to their requirements and look from their point of view.

I would say that Priesthood has two roles—prophetic leadership and servant leadership. A Prophet thinks that he gets everything from God directly and passes it on. Whereas, a Servant Leader understands the needs of the people and provides—this is called 'service to the people'. I may not be a good prophet or a good preacher, but I can do the latter role—Servant Leader—very well.



Photo: Marie Banu