

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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About Swabodhini Charitable Trust and its activities



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enterprises—there is growing
acceptance**
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From the Editor

Dear Friend,

Republic day is celebrated on 26th January every year as this day is of great importance for every Indian. This is because India was declared as a republic country on this day, and the constitution of India came into force after long years of independence struggle.

Republic day is the national holiday in India when people celebrates this great day of honour in their own way by seeing news, speech at schools or get participated in quiz competitions related to freedom of India. At this day a big event gets organized by the Government of India at the Rajpath, New Delhi where a parade takes place by the India army in front of the India Gate in the presence of President of India after unfolding the India Flag and singing National Anthem.

As we celebrate our Republic Day, it is time for some soul searching. How much progress have we made in the past six decades and how vibrant is our democracy?

When we talk of our 69 years as a democracy what immediately flashes before our eyes is a country that is stretched across all our sensibilities and technology—most evident in the big cities by way of flyovers, malls, and metro railways.

On the other hand, there is the poverty, inhuman living conditions of slum dwellers and poor water and hygiene facilities in rural schools.

The key challenges faced by our country are the need to prevent corruption, provide access to quality education, offer better health care, and curtail population growth.

All these are achievable with honesty of purpose, which makes character building the biggest challenge before us today. As an Indian, let us take an oath to make our country a peaceful and developed nation.

Jai Hind!

Marie Banu

Who are Social Workers?

Social Worker is almost equal to volunteering in any social arena. It can be full time or part time depending upon your time availability. But, everyone needs to give some time for volunteering and social work.

Social Work is a very vast area and it has geographical issues where it is defined as tribal, urban or rural. It can be classified based on gaps - haves and have-nots. The two Gs - Geography and Gaps - are what needs to be addressed. To address this, we need different efforts, one of which is to look at the base of the pyramid, i.e., social worker. They are the barefoot soldiers and there is a need to train such people to become a volunteer and give time and talent and contribute towards reaching out to people in various verticals. It may be education, health, skills, or economy. I call them three Es - Equity, Economy and Ecology. All areas of social work has got relevance to the economy of the individual; Equity - everybody is treated equally and not differentiated based on their caste, creed, colour or gender. Whatever you do for economy or equity should not result in destruction of nature, for instance, mining or polluting the environment thereby endangering the environment.

When the social workers are gathering together and they want to extend their time and their knowledge for the betterment of people who are geographically situated in different places and have different gaps in their life skills, you should bridge that gap through barefoot soldiers (social workers, social entrepreneurs, socially inclined citizens).

Barefoot soldiers are people who give more time and talent that is available with them, rather than treasure. These people are trained so that their volunteering time become available to the community like man-hours. So, if a person has 300 days in a year with 8 hours in a day, if he is able to give away 5 percent which is 100 hours regularly in pursuit of social work which is close to his heart, he becomes a barefoot soldier and is at the base of the pyramid.

The base of the pyramid has to be strong in social work. Therefore, social workers are volunteers and are very essential component of delivery. Whereas, the entrepreneur is the leader and is at the top of the pyramid or somewhere near to it. He is giving concepts, programs, methodologies, guidance, course correction, gets feedback and restructures the work - so that it benefits the base of the pyramid. They are constantly at it without any deviation so that the quantitative and replicable results can be reached.



We need both—Social Workers and Social Entrepreneurs—a leader and a follower. We need more followers than leaders because they are at the base of the pyramid and are spread out in geography, in communities and have a time dimension. They have to be available when help is needed.

The leader will do conceptual work like vision, mission, objectives, activities and outcome, output and will be able to measure the impact and interpret about how far we are going and provide feedback to social workers, who are mostly volunteers.

The volunteers can belong to any age group, but a social entrepreneur needs to be one from the social worker group, maybe 1 in 100. He should understand social issues, participate in the activity and get a live understanding. He should also design the objectives and methodology to deliver social work to the people and get a feedback of the impact and then rearrange the methodology to be better and better, i.e., prove and improve! Not all of them are leaders, nor do we want all as leaders. We also want doers!

For example, in Shiva Shakthi Kakkum Karangal, originally we thought that we should not exceed 20 to 30 children in one home as we need to have close interaction with every child in the institution. But, if you want to accommodate 100 people, then you need to have four locations. Thus, we expanded but made an error as we do not have committed people to manage the home located in four different places. If we have only one person, he or she can manage all 100 children with or without some strain.

Leadership can be given through remote monitoring, but for actual work we need social workers who are in the

base of the pyramid. In Hindi, we call them karmacharis. Such people are missing and we are now wondering whether we have adopted a wrong methodology. Probably, we should have had all the 100 children at Valsaravakkam itself or at one location as against four locations. There is conflict between the above two approaches.

We are able to create social entrepreneurs, but not social workers. We may have enough money, leadership, objectives, vision and mission, but we don't have people at the base of the pyramid. To create this, we have to go to people who have studied up to eighth standard or are school dropouts. We have to devise a way and decide on which population to focus upon. It is like recruiting army jawans. Without jawans the Major General cannot fight. Their only slogan is "Win." We have a spark for leaders, but have an inadequacy in social workers.

When we founded Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM) for social entrepreneurs, I wanted to have a parallel institution for karmacharis. They may be educated only up to 8th standard but should have basic values like wanting to help a person in suffering, feed a hungry person, talk to worried people, etc.

Talking about the base of the pyramid, we need to build consciousness and not command and control. This is because, social entrepreneurship gives you a servant leadership unlike a power leader. In business and governmental administrations, when people are placed on hierarchy based on the responsibility, accountability and power they enjoy. So, they drive most of the action by command and control. Whereas, a servant leader is one who gets people involved and do work on their own as they feel that if they don't do it there will be gap.

When you run an organisation as an NGO, you need the top leadership and you need the base of the pyramid as well. But, how they work together is their consensus. All of them should understand the objectives, activities, and what impact it is going to produce. That is the triple bottom line—people, planet and economy. People means equity, planet means ecology, and economy means some surplus creation - money or resources - so that it ensures sustainability of your work.

The social work drives basically the three Es and drives it by consensus, democracy, and understanding the basic underlying vision of the NGO and what is the impact we intend to produce.

—PN Devarajan

Engineering Livelihoods

The discourse on development is never complete without touching upon a society's ability to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for every section of its population. Often times, the process of development has also led to the loss of livelihood opportunities at a scale that could not be addressed with the rehabilitation plans in place. Under these circumstances, it is very significant to ensure alternate livelihood opportunities for all those displaced due to development and also those communities whose vocations are no longer relevant. The growth of formal sector has led to such a predicament where traditional livelihoods are unable to cope with the pace of modernization and thus co-opt or lose out in the race. Mr P Narayana Reddy was always wary of this vicious circle that culminated in the need to promote livelihood opportunities so that all communities could enjoy a decent standard of living.

Born to a middle class farmer's family in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh, Reddy graduated in Metallurgy from NIT, Durgapur. Unexpected placement as a Development Apprentice with PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) in Chhattisgarh introduced him to the development sector. Two years in managing the NGO's projects exposed him to the demanding environment in the development sector, also shaping his thoughts in the process. Raw and rustic, his interest in this sector grew. Soon, he was also able to identify his area of interest. "Sustainable livelihoods must be the focus because only this endeavor can help people realize their right to choice and a decent standard of living. Only livelihoods can create purchasing power through which people can access other opportunities. Poor communities must not be forced to live out of what is left by the rest of the society," asserts Reddy.

His next stint as Domain Expert for Microfinance Technologies in Hyderabad allowed him to work with SHGs and notice what the transformation innovative technological solutions that were customized to local needs could bring in. Moving to SKS Microfinance Limited after six months, he was involved in monitoring programmes on a daily basis and managing public relations with different stake holders, especially the local government agencies. During this tenure, Reddy came to know about CSIM's SEOP programme through social media.

"Their advertisement interested me. My work at that point in time required me to play a key role in promoting the enterprises that I worked for. So, I joined the course as it also allowed me to handle work without any break or distraction," says Reddy.

Reddy felt that CSIM's SEOP



programme not only strengthened his domain knowledge but also helped him learn the knack of promoting social enterprises. Hooked into the sector, he also pursued a Post Graduate Diploma in NGO Management. "I saw my future here and wanted to learn all that I could to prepare myself. I saw the need for professionalism in the field," shares Reddy.

The following years from 2007 to 2015 were probably the most happening years in his professional life. His engagement with the BASIX group of institutions in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Bhutan, Tanzania and East Africa exploited his capacity in programme initiation, management and also impact assessment. Livelihood promotion through different models like the SHGs, JLGs, CIGs, Grameen model and the Cooperative model under different projects promoted his expertise that was acknowledged by his membership in the Bhutan's Working Committee on the

country's Financial Inclusion Policy. Under his leadership, UNCDF project implemented through the Bhutan Development Bank Limited was able to establish the largest branch network among the financial institutions and importantly, farmers outreach banking services across the country. He also led the team which performed a diagnostic study of the non performing assets of Bhutan Development Bank.

Africa had more in store for Reddy. As the Country Programme Manager, he was in charge of establishing and implementing the African Livelihoods Partnership that focused on financial inclusion, youth entrepreneurship and self employment, agricultural productivity enhancement and value chain financing, by creating a network of local organizations including the Government, NGOs, banks, MFIs, private sector, University and others. Reddy played an instrumental role in

promoting Producers' Business Centres that were owned and managed by the communities, while also providing technical assistance to MFIs that financed women's groups.

Presently, he is working with SKS Microfinance in Hyderabad trying to automate field operations, execute a cashless disbursement process, introduce alternate delivery channels for deposits and systems to improve processes. In all his work places, Reddy began from the scratch – scanned the local situations, environment, needs, then devised a strategy to promote livelihoods, developed a project action plan, implemented and also evaluated these endeavours.

Having studied metallurgy, Reddy entered the development sector out of pure interest without any prior association or experience. Eventually, he decided to pursue his career in this very sector so that he could work for what he believed – access to livelihood opportunities that ensured access to all other opportunities,



emphasizing the right of choice of the common people."

Reddy chose to contribute his part by working for organizations that had a similar vision and prepared himself to reach this level of professional leadership. With close to 13 years of experience in the field, he still does not dream of starting his own enterprise. "I want to engage in promoting sustainable producer companies that provide integrated member centric services to improve the living standard of underprivileged sections. I look forward to collaborating with various organizations working for the same cause," he smiles.

If you wish to seek his advisory services, please write to pnarayana.recd@gmail.com.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Inspiring Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

On another occasion, the evening was calm and cloudy. It was drizzling occasionally and somewhat cool in consequence. The windows of the Asramam Hall were closed and Maharshi was seated as usual on the sofa. Facing him sat the devotees. Some visitors had come from Cuddalore. A Sub-Judge, accompanied by two elderly ladies, was among them. The Sub-Judge began the discussion as to the impermanence of all mundane things, by putting the question. "Has the discrimination between Reality and Unreality (*Sat asat vicharana*) the efficacy in itself to lead us to the realisation of the one Imperishable?"

M.: As propounded by all and realised by all true seekers, fixity in the Supreme Spirit (*Brahma nishta*) alone can make us know and realise it. It being of us and in us, any amount of discrimination (*vivechana*) can lead us only one step forward, by making us renouncers, by goading us to discard the seeming (*abhasa*) as transitory and to hold fast to the eternal truth and presence alone.

The conversation turned upon the question as to whether *Iswara Prasad* (Divine Grace) is necessary for the attaining of *samrajya* (universal dominion) or whether a *jiva's* honest and strenuous efforts to attain it cannot of themselves lead him to That from whence is no return to life and death. The Maharshi with an ineffable smile which lit up His Holy Face and which was all-pervasive, shining upon the coterie around him, replied in tones of certainty and with the ring of truth; "Divine Grace is essential for Realisation. It leads one to God-realisation. But such Grace is vouchsafed only to him who is a true devotee or a *yogin*, who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path towards freedom."

D.: There are six centres mentioned in the Yoga books; but the *jiva* is said to reside in the Heart. Is it not so?

M.: Yes. The *jiva* is said to remain in the



Heart in deep sleep; and in the brain in the waking state. The Heart need not be taken to be the muscular cavity with four chambers which propels blood. There are indeed passages which support the view. There are others who take it to mean a set of ganglia or nerve centres about that region. Whichever view is correct does not matter to us. We are not concerned with anything less than ourselves. That we have certainly within us. There could be no

doubts or discussions about that.

The Heart is used in the Vedas and the scriptures to denote the place whence the notion 'I' springs. Does it spring only from the fleshy ball? It springs within us somewhere right in the middle of our being. The 'I' has no location. Everything is the Self. There is nothing but that.

So the Heart must be said to be the entire

body of ourselves and of the entire universe, conceived as 'I'. But to help the practiser (*abhyasi*) we have to indicate a definite part of the Universe, or of the Body. So this Heart is pointed out as the seat of the Self. But in truth we are everywhere, we are all that is, and there is nothing else.

D.: It is said that Divine Grace is necessary to attain successful un-distracted mind (*samadhi*). Is that so?

M.: We are God (*Iswara*). *Iswara Drishti* (i.e., seeing ourselves as God) is itself Divine Grace. So we need Divine Grace to get God's Grace.

Maharshi smiles and all devotees laugh together.

D.: There is also Divine Favour (*Iswara anugraham*) as distinct from Divine Grace (*Iswara prasadam*). Is that so?

M.: The thought of God is Divine Favour! He is by nature Grace (*prasad or arul*). It is by God's Grace that you think of God.

D.: Is not the Master's Grace the result of God's Grace?

M.: Why distinguish between the two? The Master is the same as God and not different from him.

D.: When an endeavour is made to lead the right life and to concentrate thought on the Self, there is often a downfall and break. What is to be done?

M.: It will come all right in the end. There is the steady impulse of your determination that sets you on your feet again after every downfall and breakdown. Gradually the obstacles are all overcome and your current becomes stronger. Everything comes right in the end. Steady determination is what is required.

—Excerpted from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*

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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The Karbis and their tryst with Rubber

Keleng heads the Evergreen Rubber Producers Society, started in 2007, with 48 youngsters hailing from 6 neighboring villages as members.



The Karbis are among the earliest inhabitants of Assam and predominantly live in the Karbi Anglong and Kamrup districts of Assam. The Karbis traditionally practice jhum cultivation in the hills. They grow variety of crops which include foodgrains, vegetables and fruits like rice, maize, potato, tapioca, beans, ginger and turmeric. They are quiet self-sufficient and have homestead gardens with betel nut, jackfruit, oranges, pineapple, etc. which fulfill their nutritional as well as food needs. However, with the integration of the traditional lifestyle with the market economy, many of the traditional institutions and way of life has been left damaged, bringing about unending sufferings on the people. Karbi people have the highest HPI (Human Poverty Index) value of 33.52, indicating that this tribe has the highest number of people in human poverty.

Sambhu Keleng, 30 years, of Rewa Maheswar a village in the Kamrup district of Assam hails from a traditional farming family where rice is cultivated once a year and vegetables during the other months. 80% of the people in this area were small farmers and the rest had migrated to towns for employment. He lived in a joint family and after the death of his father, the family land was distributed amongst his uncles and him. He had to take care of 3 of his brothers and his mother from the meager

income that he earned from his share of land. Fortunately, Keleng was introduced to rubber when he was 20 years old. He had also read about rubber in Tripura when he was in school and he decided to start rubber cultivation in one patch of his land which was not used much for cultivation. With the help of the Rubber Board he planted around 200 rubber trees and started his life as a rubber farmer.

Seeing his farm and the support meted out by the Rubber Board Extension Officers to him, many followed suit and started to plant Rubber in their small holdings. Today, Keleng heads the Evergreen Rubber Producers Society, started in 2007, with 48 youngsters hailing from 6 neighboring villages as members. Six of them have started tapping around 900 rubber trees and others are eagerly waiting for one or two years to start tapping. All the members are below 30 years of age and they are all convinced that their lives would be secured in a few years after seeing the success of Keleng. Their aspirations of owning two wheelers and cars are nearing fulfillment which has been a great motivation for them to get into rubber farming.

"The rice and vegetables we cultivated in our farms were largely meant for our own consumption and we are able to sell only small quantities. It was sufficient for our day to day existence only. We never had any regular earnings, money for any

emergencies or savings. Now rubber farming has enabled us to have bank accounts and also save money. We are also able to afford getting new clothes and celebrate festivals. If not for rubber, I would still be living in penury, the way in which my dad had lived most of his lifetime," says Prokhen Rehang, the Vice President of the society.

“ Karbi people have the highest HPI (Human Poverty Index) value of 33.52, indicating that this tribe has the highest number of people in human poverty.

"My brother is a veterinary doctor and he, along with his wife, works in Guwahati. I am sure that within two years my earning potential would be more than him and I can have all the luxuries that people in cities have. I am also certain of having the greatest joy of living in my village along with my friends and family," says Keleng. His wife says: "After seeing the way my husband has prospered after planting rubber, my father has also engaged in rubber farming two years ago." This trigger effect generated by

rubber has brought in fortune to the Karbi farmers.

"I got a job for 15,000 rupees in Jorhat, but I did not join. I tap around 160 trees on alternate days and am able to collect a sizeable quantity of rubber latex. I am sure I can earn 50,000 rupees a month after a few years. Why would I ever want to leave my village and seek employment outside?" asks Keleng

The youngest member in the group is pursuing his first year of graduation in a local college. "It will be a double treat for me when I finish my graduation after two years as my rubber trees would be seven years old and I can start tapping them. I am eagerly waiting for that day to come. Sambhu has been a great source of inspiration and a role model to me. I look forward to selling my rubber and making money!" says this young lad.

Krishna Das, the Extension Officer of Rubber Board working for the Kamrup District is a very content man. "I am very happy to see the way these Karbi tribal have settled in their lives. It gives me an immense pleasure to work for them. They value and follow all the instructions given by us and eagerly wait for our visits. I am so glad that Rubber brought riches in their lives. I can write a series of rags to riches story on every Rubber farmer I interact with," says Krishna Das.

—Latha Suresh

Understanding Autism

Back in 1989, a school for special children was started with the sole purpose of catering to the needs of just four special children. Today, 27 years later, Swabodhini — run by the Swabodhini Charitable Trust — has nearly 45 children with special needs, under its fold. These growing numbers point to an increase in awareness that autism — a neuro-developmental disorder that affects nearly 21.7 million people world over — has received. “There is much more awareness about Autism and autistic children in society today. There have been a number of movies that have depicted about people with autism, autism awareness walks and charity initiatives that have helped spread awareness,” says Radha Ganesan, who is the founder and director of Swabodhini and the managing trustee of the Swabodhini Charitable Trust. Today, Swabodhini is committed to the educational needs of special children, in addition to providing speech therapy and occupational therapy to such children.

“Autism is a hidden disability,” says Radha, as she tries to de-bunk some of the myths associated with the disorder. She continues: “Corporate enterprises, the industry and government must reach out to provide open or sheltered employability opportunities for students with autism, schools and colleges must introduce extra credits for students volunteering service. Autism awareness programmes have to be conducted throughout the year to make an impact in society,” summing up all the present-day requirements that are needed to spread more awareness about the disorder. In a sense, that’s also exactly what Swabodhini has been facilitating for nearly three decades now, in its attempt to rehabilitate students with autism. “Swabodhini has placed three of its students into open employment in the assembly line of Grundfos India — they have been designated as Junior Technicians are doing well for themselves for five years,” says Radha. Another one of school’s students won 3 gold medals in roller skating in the Special Olympics held in Chandigarh.

All these achievements aside, the

real worry, Radha feels is the number of myths that continue to persist about autism itself. “One of these misconceptions is simply the fact that people think children with autism are intellectually disabled,” she says, “Many children with autism have normal to high IQs and some of them excel in maths, music and art.” Another misconception is the notion that autistic children do not make friends. “Opportunities must be initiated and consistently followed to make friends. As children with autism are not able to communicate the way we do, they are seen to have no desire for relationships,” Radha explains. The



Radha Ganesan

misconceptions do not end there. Another huge misconception is the continued belief in the ‘vaccine hypothesis’, a 1997 theory suggesting that vaccination was one of the causes of autism — one that has been retracted. “The fact is simply that autism is a neurobiological disorder characterised by impaired social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication and restricted and repetitive behaviour,” clarifies Radha, “What we at Swabodhini strive to work on, is to improve our children’s communication, socialisation, behaviour and life skills. In doing that, we also provide opportunities for skill-development — like road crossing, bus travel, shopping experiences and financial transactions.”

But challenges have always been around the corner. The biggest one facing Swabodhini today, is the difficulty in renting out a premise to

set up a school for special children.

“The very mention of a ‘school for special children’ usually elicits a negative response,” says Radha, drawing attention to the stigma that continues to exist with respect to neuro-developmental disorders in society. “That’s why another big need today, is to convince and sensitize parents into understanding that acceptance of their child’s disability is the first step to faster progress.” That is perhaps why Swabodhini also dedicates part of its mission towards counselling and educating parents of special children on turning into educators themselves. Finding special educators and trained therapists, is of course another challenge in itself.

Even as this continues to take place, the priority lies in treating autistic children. A large part of this treatment lies in regular teaching of subjects like science, sports, gardening and even extra-curricular activities. Yoga therapy, speech therapy and play therapy have also helped along the way, in facilitating the process. Radha is quick to insist though, that although not curable, autism is indeed treatable. “There are some effective treatments and training methodologies and approaches for children with autism that facilitate their ability to function better,” she says.

In the immediate future, Swabodhini will continue to do what it does best: cater to special students aged between ages 4 and 25. “The school offers vocational training programmes in Computer and Admin skills, retail business skills, culinary, photocopying and paper cup making,” says Radha, recounting the many aspects that make Swabodhini stand apart. She continues: “Our vision is to be a centre of excellence for providing state-of-the-art vocational training to prepare students with autism and intellectual disabilities for sheltered, open or self employment thus enabling them to lead independent and dignified lives as integral members of society.” In doing that, the school has taken a giant stride towards both: removing the stigma associated with developmental impairment, and paving a pathway towards a better future for children afflicted by a neuro-developmental disorder like autism.

Swabodhini is committed to the educational needs of special children, in addition to providing speech therapy and occupational therapy to such children.



Tech entrepreneur Raju Reddy talks about tackling rural poverty through the Kakatiya Sandbox

Tech entrepreneur Raju Reddy knows a thing or two about entrepreneurship. After all, he sold his startup Sierra Atlantic to Hitachi Consulting in 2011, in a million-million dollar deal. Now he's turned his sights on changing the landscape of rural India by unleashing the power of social entrepreneurship. His primary vehicle for change is an offshoot of the Deshpande Foundation's Hubli Sandbox incubation model.

"I love pride of India stories such as entrepreneurs reshaping India. I come here once every three months," says Raju. An avid mentor and angel investor, both in India and the U.S., Raju invested in and served on internet success story startup redBus.in. At present he serves on the board of Seclore, Espresso Logic and GharPay. As Chairman of BITSAA International he helps oversee the BITS founded initiative to increase networking, fundraising, partnerships and collaborative activities. Another initiative that Raju is involved in is Billion Dollar Babies, which is an effort to galvanize the might of Indian Americans to connect Indian startups to the ecosystem in the U.S and help become unicorns (valuation of a billion dollars or above).

Having reaped the benefits of entrepreneurship, Raju has switched gears to giving back, and has slowly imbibed a spirit of philanthrocapitalism, an approach that Bill Gates and Pierre Omidyar are also employing. One of his first philanthropic initiatives that he supported and helped organize was Sevathon. Started in 2009 by the India Community Center, based in the U.S, its objective is to recognize, promote and nurture a spirit of "Seva" or service to others. Through an annual half-day walkathon the event helps raise awareness and funds for different non-profits. Started as a small pilot of about 100 people and supporting a handful of nonprofits, it currently attracts 5,000 people and supports over 100 nonprofits, and has spread beyond the Bay area into other U.S. cities like Chicago.

But he was yearning for something more, that involved getting back to his roots, in his native state Hyderabad. "I'm still on the Hitachi board for one of the group companies, but its an advisory role, so I have freedom to do other things and wanted to do something in rural India, there are two different India. There's the Jubilee Hills India and there's India of Nizamabad," adds Raju. When he visited the Hubli-Dharwad region, he saw the wonderful work that the Deshpande Foundation had done, with the Hubli Sandbox model of social entrepreneurship that uses the innovator hub approach to solve large scale problems leveraging entrepreneurship, education and a bottom-up innovation approach.

He teamed up with fellow tech



entrepreneur redBus.in co-founder Phanindra Sama, to launch Kakatiya Sandbox model that follows the Hubli Sandbox philosophy and approach. It is one of bottom-up innovation, where the local entrepreneurs identify problems and come up with their own solutions. His job he says is to be an enabler and help create an ecosystem for innovation.

The Kakatiya Sandbox works in the areas of Nizamabad, Karimnagar, and Madag. Raju is thrilled with the outcomes they are starting to see, especially when it comes to agriculture, boosting livelihoods and getting more kids to attend finishing schools. From two programs initially, the Kakatiya Sandbox has 12 programs, that are both in the for profit and nonprofit space. He quotes the example of Shrikant Bola, an MIT graduate, who has created employment for differently abled folks, a population that has an unemployment rate close to 90 percent.

The Kakatiya Sandbox is an offshoot of the Deshpande Foundation's partner, Action for India's (AFI) flagship program Vision 2020 Hub Project, which is an attempt to scaling the Hubli Sandbox

model across 20 cities. Raju says that the creation of 20 such innovation hubs across rural India will impact the lives of 20 crore rural folk. "If that can be made to work roughly 25 percent of India rural's population will be impacted. My belief is that lots of people are doing wonderful work at the village level. But unless things are done on scale we can't make impact, I hope that we can do this with the sandbox model," says Raju.

He's of the opinion that charity doesn't work and the rigor of business and entrepreneurship needs to be applied so that there's accountability. Raju also wants to be able to do it more frugally, as he jokingly says that he wants spend Rs. 1 crore where the Deshpande Foundation spent \$1 million, for the same impact. This, he says will happen because he has the team of Deshpande helping him execute on the ground, and they will utilise all learnings from their previous experiments, and produce similar outcomes with lesser capital.

He's extending an invitation to social enterprises and nonprofits to come and set up shop with the Kakatiya Sandbox. What

can a social enterprise or nonprofit expect from the Kakatiya Sandbox? Other than infrastructure support, funding and mentoring: entrepreneurs will be able to reach districts in fairly deep level, the Sandbox facilitators will also help market their product and services by providing customer reach. Some of the sectors that that can be invested in are agriculture, education, water, healthcare water harvesting and financial inclusion.

Social entrepreneurs and founders of nonprofits can attend the Development Dialogue 2016 at Kakatiya Sandbox, conference with the theme 'Execute Locally, Innovate Globally', on 30th January, 2016, at Brindavanam Gardens, Hyderabad Road, Nizamabad to know more.

You can read more about it here <http://www.kakatiyasandbox.in/> or call 767-405-2777. Email: ksandbox@dfmail.org

—Nelson Vinod Moses

Empowering rural women to teach children

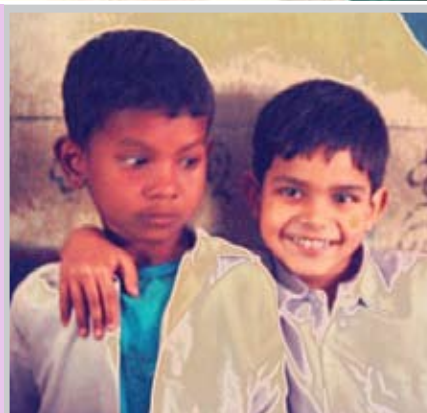
The Indian Education System has come a long way since independence. With new players in the field, entrepreneurship in education has brought in new models and approaches that try to use education as a medium for social change. The age old residential schooling was one such initiative that tried to equalise opportunities for both genders. Yet, sensitisation is not on everybody's cards. Even before we examine that further, do all children learn at all? Enrolment and learning are two distinct things. 97% of our children might be in schools but more than 250 million children are wrought with serious learning difficulties. Schooling is not able to achieve desired learning levels probably because around 80 million children (mostly from rural areas) lack an enabling environment prior to joining schools. Enrolment with requisite learning skills has become the order of the day, so this deficiency results in high dropout ratios even before children reach class 8, as rural families cannot afford pre-school or early childhood education.

Another deep concern in the rural areas is the status of women. Gender sensitisation, although dreamt of and acted upon for decades, has not been achieved. Gender Inequality Index ranks India 132 out of 148 societies. In the rural areas, most women don't just miss an enabling environment prior to schooling, they almost give up schooling to help manage families. With limited education and lack of proper skills, women workforce is largely restricted to farm and domestic activities. TatvaGyan is a social enterprise based in Odisha that aimed to address these two issues simultaneously. "TatvaGyan chose to offer high quality, affordable early childhood & remedial classes through a chain of women managed learning hubs (called 'Think Zone') in the villages of Odisha," informs Mr Binayak Acharya, the Founder of TatvaGyan.

Their pilot in 2014 proved that students' performances improved and positive changes were also observed in their behaviour. TatvaGyan's baseline revealed that parents from low income households were willing to spend up to 15 percent of their income on education. Thus convinced of this market based approach serving the low income families, TatvaGyan launched its learning hubs. TatvaGyan began by providing a play based programme in a safe and stimulating environment for preschool training. Enrolling children was initially a challenge. Eventually as the after school programme to support every child based on their levels of ability (instead of age) demonstrated the effectiveness of this programme, parents became more open to this effort.



TatvaGyan chose to offer high quality, affordable early childhood & remedial classes through a chain of women managed learning hubs (called 'Think Zone') in the villages of Odisha.



Strengthened by technological interface that further enhanced the experience of activity based learning, this programme helped inculcate interest in learning from the formative years itself. Along with preschool what has also become unaffordable for those 'in the bottom of the pyramid' are remedial classes that supplement the learning process. Therefore children who went to schools but could not follow the pace of curriculum transaction were able to continue learning at their own pace. The programme's design made sure that the children acquired a threshold level of competence before moving full-fledged into the local school system.

But all of this was not done by highly educated volunteers or well paid teachers. The complete chain of operations and the 'ThinkZones' are all

managed by local women, capacitating them to become local leaders and offering real livelihood opportunities outside farm/domestic work. TatvaGyan consciously invested in building its core team that developed teaching materials, pedagogy and the technological set up, and also trained women from the community in using these tools to teach the children. Binayak recalls that the whole process brought about a significant transformation in the women who were now more articulate and confident about choices for their children.

TatvaGyan's vision is to build this programme into a sustainable, replicable, community managed model where the learning hubs were managed by locally generated revenues. As every community member engaged in this

chain of processes was trained, the quality of instructions, execution of the think zones and thence the scaling of these hubs promise to create a double impact on the society. "We follow a process oriented approach and the pilot has been very convincing," insists Binayak soon adding that monitoring of learning outcomes by the women themselves allowed them to assess their performances. The women, by carefully using the tablets given to feed in learning outcomes, have also been contributing to the improvement of curriculum and training programmes. As this ensures availability of real time information on student performances from all the hubs, TatvaGyan also builds evidence to validate this model, which can then be replicated by other communities.

TatvaGyan's model was chosen as a 'high potential social enterprise' by Villgro and Intelec in 2014. Villgro also acknowledged TatvaGyan as the best Odisha based social enterprise in 2015. As one among the 18 global cohort of social enterprises recognised by the GSBI (2015) and the upcoming social enterprises at the Tata Social Enterprise Challenge (organised by IIM Calcutta), the two year old enterprise dreams to make its presence felt in 220 villages in Odisha, reaching out to 8000 students by the year 2018.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Stakeholder Management—impact on project lifeline

Having discussed about time, cost, quality, risk and communication, it is important to focus on stakeholder management as the next area that affects the effectiveness of a project. Anyone who has a legitimate interest or stake in the project or process is a stakeholder. There is a difference between a stakeholder and a shareholder. A shareholder owns part of a company through stock ownership, while a stakeholder is interested in the performance of a company for reasons other than just stock appreciation. While customers are primary stake holders, the others are employees, staff, suppliers, vendors, investors, funding agencies, donors, end users, government, unions, and so on including the community at large. While corporates flash the key words of ‘customer delight’; ‘customer is King/Queen’; ‘customer is always right’; customer comes first’ and so on, the social organizations which serve the community has to take care of the community interest at large while focusing on stakeholder management.

The word ‘management’ indicates it cannot be done as a one-time activity but it is an ongoing planned focused activity. We need to understand everything about these stakeholders so that we manage both expectations and demand the best out of each other. So Stakeholder Management is a process required to identify & manage expectations of ALL stakeholders that can impact or be impacted by the project.

The first and foremost thing is to identify who all are the stakeholders. The stakeholders may be internal or external. The internal stakeholders are primarily the employees, management, donors and who are directly connected to ensuring the implementation of the project. The external stakeholders are those who are outside the organization and its operations, yet are indirectly and directly connected to the project primarily the customers, government, recipients and beneficiaries and so on. The clarity on the internal may be easier to identify when compared to identifying all the external stakeholders.

One of the foremost activity is to identify and prepare a thorough document of the relevant information regarding each stakeholders’ interest, needs, impact, control/ power, attitude towards each task / activity / project / business at large. This is analyzed using expert judgement, meetings, templates of data / requirements gathering and informal meetings and so on. The documentation is known as the stakeholder register which can be assessed for any reference and decision making. The decision on the frequency of meeting and communication is planned based on the impact they have on the project.



Stakeholder	Interest in the Project	Assessment of Impact	Potential strategies for gaining support or reducing obstacles
Stakeholder 1	high	influential	Weekly reports, stakeholder plan plus in-person meeting
Stakeholder 2	med	leading	Biweekly reports
Stakeholder 3	high	supportive	Monthly reports

There are many factors that contribute to efficient stakeholder management. If the same is ignored or mismanaged, it impacts the success and failure of the project.

- Reputation and credibility of the person/organization managing stakeholders: This is a very important factor that directly affects how the information is received by the stakeholder. Reputation and credibility has to be built with focused efforts and consistency in follow through of small and large actions irrespective of internal or external stakeholder.
- Status held by the person within the organization: The hierarchy and status of the person who manages the stakeholders within and outside the organization plays a key role in the way the stakeholders will receive the inputs and respond to them. The expectations of the stakeholders has to be understood well before the person to deal with them is selected.
- Environmental background and understanding of the context: The dynamic changing context has to be understood and context taken into consideration before presenting any data to the stakeholder. If the context is adverse even a positive data can be viewed negatively.
- Dysfunctional emotional behaviors: Unwanted discussions and wrongly displayed emotions can disrupt stakeholder relationships. The person managing the stakeholders should be careful not to instigate such possibilities as well as know how to dissipate if it arises.
- Situational consideration: Predefined mindset can enable or mar the management process. Both affect the purity and freshness of the current context therefore coloring the response.
- Historical consideration in message interpretation: Good and extensive documentation if not done will badly affect the decision making process in stakeholder management. Minutes of meeting become very important with appropriate follow through of actions.
- Communication: The ambiguity in language understanding; semantics that are used and the way they are interpreted based on the culture can impact the way stakeholders receive communication. Hidden agendas or multiple agendas of the stakeholders as well as the social organization play a nasty role in delaying or closing the project itself. In a social organization great emphasis is placed in understanding these dimensions of the community before attempting to manage and relate to them.
- Knowledge Base: The knowledge of technical and process dimensions if not sufficient it can directly impact the trust and involvement of the stakeholders. Education of the stakeholders is also a critical responsibility.
- Time and attitude towards time: The sense of urgency and time management has to match with the project plan and the stakeholder decisions. Non-alignment can affect project continuation.
- Diversity and cross cultural issues:

Most projects that have succeeded in one cultural or geographical area may not work in another area. The stakeholder’s response to the project is dependent on the culture, practices and attitude. A thorough study of the stakeholder perspectives is critical for the project success.

One of the blocks to stakeholder management is the process of filtering. This phenomenon occurs when a large portion of the message is lost in vertical/horizontal stakeholder. To ensure that there are no gaps or missing links in the communication, understanding and expectation management, one needs to ensure that they use appropriate communication methods and capture them in Issue Log, Change Requests, Project Management Plan Updates, Project Documents update, Organizational Process Assets updates and so on.

Added to this the control mechanisms of managing all the stakeholders through the life cycle of the project using Work performance information, Change requests, Project management plan updates, Project documents updates, Organizational process assets updates are ongoing. These have to be reported in management information systems, dashboards, score cards, review meetings and other forums both quantitatively and qualitatively so that all the stakeholders are aware, updated and in the loop for all the required and relevant matter. No information or improper information can have deeper impact and the effort to correct and change the mindset is a herculean task. That is where in social organizations stakeholders with vested interest can play with the psyche of the people and totally kill a high impact project. Stakeholder management is ultimately all about how we manage the most important set of people for all that they are staking for.

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath and Prathaap B

Social Audit Master Class



Social Accounting and Audit Master Class was organised by SAN, India from 7th to 9th January 2016 at Loyola College, Chennai. 20 participants - CSR Heads, Development consultants, Academicians, Corporate Employees, and NGO representatives- enrolled for the training and are in the process of becoming a Social Auditor.

The training sessions were handled by Mrs. Girija Kumarbabu, Social Auditor, Mr. Ramaiyer Ramachandran, ISO certified Environmental Auditor, Mrs. Latha Suresh, Director, SAN, India and Ms. Marie Banu, Social Auditor.

On the third day of the training, the participants were exposed to a live Social Audit at CONCERN, an NGO that works in the field of addiction - rehabilitation in Madambakkam, Chennai.

The social accounts was written by Mrs. Bhanu Suresh, Founder of CONCERN, which was reviewed by the team - the participants who served as panel members and Marie Banu as the Social Auditor. Mrs. Latha Suresh mentored the team and shared her inputs. Each of the participants will be further trained by SAN, India for a period of 6 to 12 months.

The following are the processes involved in becoming a Social Auditor:

Stage 1: Attending a Master Class in Social Accounting and Audit

Stage 2: Identifying an organisation and creating SAA Framework

Stage 3: Developing Indicators, Data collection and analysis

Stage 4: Writing the Social Accounts

Stage 5: Serving as panel member for another organisation's Social Audit exercise and verify their social accounts

Stage 6: Writing shadow notes for another organisation's Social Audit Panel

Stage 7: Chairing a Social Audit panel in the presence of a SAN, Auditor.

The next SAA Master Class is scheduled on May 2016 in Chennai. If you wish to enrol, please write to socialaudittraining@gmail.com or call Latha Suresh at 9822205123 or Marie Banu at 9884700029.



“The issues are not absent in Australia but are different; and the attitude towards social enterprises—there is growing acceptance.”

Dr. Gavin Melles shares with **Marie Banu** about the Social Enterprise scenario across the globe.

Dr Gavin Melles is Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Health, Arts & Design, Swinburne University (Melbourne Australia). He is a researcher with the Collaborative Research Centre for Low Carbon Living, teaches research methods and supervises PhD candidates in Design for Social Innovation. He is a social business mentor for the School of Social Entrepreneurs (Australia) and assessor for the Australian Research Council and Swiss National Research Council.

He has been visiting research fellow in Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland. He has PhD (Education), Masters of Linguistic Anthropology, and is completing an MSc in Sustainable Development (SOAS, University of London) focused on livelihood oriented social enterprise in Southern India.

In an exclusive interview, Dr. Gavin Melles shares with Marie Banu the Social Enterprise scenario across the globe.

About your trip to India?

I have been coming to India for a couple of years now. I have a strong relationship with Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CSIE) at IIT Madras. Swinburne University of Technology at Melbourne and IITM have an agreement and joint research and PhD students. I have been teaching at Swinburne University for the last 10 years and was also until 2016 involved in international relations and research.

In addition to CSIE I do have some connections with Social Enterprise organisations — Okapi Consultancy, Villgro, and DesiCrew — in Tamil Nadu.

I am presently completing MSc Sustainable Development (Development Planning) at SOAS, London, and the focus is the links between social enterprise – in the various ways that is conceived – and social development especially as understood from a sustainable livelihoods perspective (a framework developed by DFID and also promoted by World Bank and others). So, this visit in India I am specifically completing the dissertation work about livelihood oriented social enterprises for my research purpose.

Can you tell us about the Centre for Social Impact at Swinburne University?

Swinburne University has a Centre for Social Impact (CSI) where there is common Master's Programme taught by four different universities in Australia. I have occasional linkages there and recently evaluated one of their PhD students who is looking at social enterprises at Vietnam. Professor Jo Barakeet heads CSI. In our Business and Law Faculty (FBL), entrepreneurship and



innovation are strong and one branch of that is Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

This coming year I will be teaching to the Masters in the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme about creativity and innovation.

What made you get interested in the social enterprise area?

Although recently I have got involved in social entrepreneurship, there has been a history or context for me to get interested in this area. About 30 years ago, I lived in Costa Rica along with my wife for some years. I was working for a church based group and at the same time studying in a university about indigenous languages and culture. While I was doing my Masters in Linguistic Anthropology in Costa Rica, I started to think again about how the society in Costa Rica was divided with the indigenous people at the bottom. When I did my PhD (Education) I did an ethnography about migrants learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and that kept my focus on culture and social

issues. I now volunteer as a social business mentor for the School of Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) which is setting up in Delhi, India. I also teach social innovation through design at university and invest in Milaap micro-finance platform.

What is your view about the entire social enterprise sector across the globe?

I have realized over the time that when people say ‘social enterprise’ they mean a lot of things – for profit and not for profit; and individual focused and community focused.

You can't understand social enterprise in India or Vietnam or Australia or UK, unless you understand the socio-cultural and institutional environment in which it operates, i.e., government social policy initiatives, venture capital that is available, and the NGOS. All these organisations make the environment favourable to change or development. In India, from what I know, you have the caste, gender, socio-economic status—all of these influence the extent of which social enterprises is acceptable and for whom.

Three books have helped me understand current challenges: Sen & Dreze's book *India: an Uncertain Future* (2013), *Recasting India* (2014) by Hindol Gupta, and Ramachandra Guha's (2011) *India After Gandhi*.

In Australia, we have an excluded population of aboriginals who have much lower life expectancy and health problems. The issues are not absent in Australia but are different; and the attitude towards social enterprises—there is growing acceptance.

About the ideology on social enterprise in India?

A year or so ago, I had met Professor Amaresh Chakrabarty, head of engineering design, IISc Bangalore at an Indo-Dutch Conference on Design and Well-being. He said that I should think of India like Europe and not the USA as it is like a bunch of different countries with difference languages put together. These regional and district level differences affect how social enterprise works or is accepted.

When you talk about Social Enterprise and even the basic division about the poor North and the more developed South in India, it would only make sense to talk about social enterprise with a regional understanding. There are a lot of claims about how social enterprise is changing India but whether there is a good connect with government social policy remains to be seen. The entrepreneurial spirit, affordable innovation and the fortune at the bottom of the pyramid; there is so much to do and as an outsider I can see that change is happening!

Do you think that Social Accounting and Audit is essential for the social sector?

I was discussing with Joe Barakeet, Head of Centre for Social Impact at Swinburne University exactly about this as in Australia, where there is debate about impact assessment. Joe said to me that she thought that Social Accounting approach of the Social Audit Network (SAN) is probably one of the best formal holistic process.

Essentially, I see the problem globally wherein people are not assessing but just telling good stories. It is not enough. There is a small move in Australia towards needs based assessment. But, I think that if we allow the organization to have its own system – the downside is how would that be consistent?

I found the recent training organized by SAN, India in Chennai a great way to make an organization explicit about their work.