

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

RNI No.TNENG/2013/52428 | Volume 4 | Issue 7 | July 2016 | 12 Pages | For Free Circulation Only| www.msdsrtrust.org



Cover Story - Pg 6

Understanding the anatomy of poverty

Buzz India's free personal development program for rural women at their doorstep



Published by P.N.Subramanian on behalf of
Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani,
391/1, Venkatachalapathi Nagar, Alapakam,
Chennai - 600 116 and printed by him at
Express Press, Express Gardens, No.29, Second
Main Road, Ambattur Industrial Estate,
Chennai - 600 058.

Editor : Marie Banu
Phone : 044-42805365



Alumni Talk Pg 3

Tailoring to Empowerment
Kalaiselvi's efforts to empower
women through Survo Trust at
Kancheepuram



Profile Pg 9

**From Child Labourers to
Entrepreneurs**
About Raza Educational and
Social Welfare Society that
works towards elimination of
child labour in Bangalore



Chit Chat Pg 12

**"When a child is properly
taken care until the age of 15,
nothing can change him after
that."**

An exclusive interview with
P Samuthirakani

From the Editor

Dear Friend,

Every child is unique, and needs to be handled differently. To successfully raise your children it takes a lot of love. There are many aspects concerning parenting. Parents have different responsibilities, but there are three, in particular, that are important. Being a good role model; listening to your children; and disciplining them appropriately. If you wish to be a good parent you have to prioritise your children's needs first.

Children are like sponges. We should show our children to be a good person by being good ourselves. We should let them know that they can be anything they want to be, but at the same time we must have control on their physical and moral environment where they can develop habits of honesty, generosity, and responsibility.

It is important to listen to our children, because if you don't give them enough attention they might try and seek it in a negative way elsewhere. When they seek our approval, it gives them confidence.

Lastly, discipline is another very important responsibility. The best thing to do is to pick your battles, because if you are constantly saying "no" your child will tune it out. You also have to be consistent. For example, you can't let your child eat chocolates before dinner one night and then tell them not to eat it the next night.

Children need to know that their parents are their best friends and will only do what is best for them. The choices the parents make for their children when they are young will reflect on who they become later on in life. The best thing you can do for your child is to stand by their choices and motivate them to the best of your abilities.

Children are the future of the world and need to be nurtured and educated in the best conditions. There are several changemakers working in the field of education, and we have featured a few in our issue. Even our celebrity this month talks about children and the role of a parent.

Parenting is an art, family relationships experts say. Positive parenting is crucial to forming strong families that help children realize their potential.

Happy reading!

Marie Banu

Write a new you

If you believe you can do a thing, or if you believe you cannot, you're usually right. — Henry Ford



The context is the view of the world that emerges from one's set of beliefs, values and life experiences. If one's beliefs are limiting, the context is also constraining. The constraint appears in one's behaviors. Then the future that happens is a default one where one is not even aware that the stories (in other words the beliefs that you carry) is resulting in a future.

When you decide to "write a new you", the place to start is your beliefs. Inquire into your beliefs and ask yourself what is the context I am living in? Is it serving me—in other words is it meeting my needs? If not, this is the moment of making a choice. This choice is the

shift in context which results in letting go the beliefs that are limiting. This moment of choice offers possibilities that is a crucial ingredient in creating a new future that causes a new you to emerge.

For example, one can have a context of survival driven by beliefs of helplessness and worthlessness. On the other hand, the context can be of contribution, driven by empowering beliefs of creation and partnership.

Would you be willing to set yourself up for a freedom experiment? Drop --- "I can't, I shouldn't, I don't have, I'm not, I'm too..." Become aware of how many times these words

appear in your inner conversation. At that moment make a choice of letting go that limiting belief and choose an empowering context stemming from "I can, I want to, I'm..."

Beliefs such as I am confident, I am loving, I commit to truth and being authentic give us a context of transformation and therefore emerges a new you---able to impact others powerfully and live in one's own power completely.

With practice, the veil of beliefs that has confined our lives dissolves and our trust in our true nature guides us in living and loving fully. —Tara Brach

Yours Energetically

Ms. Bhuvaneshwari Ravi is trainer, facilitator and coach of the Positive Energy (PE) program. She is a spiritual seeker with a vision of transforming her own energy state from surviving to being. In this journey she has gathered deep insights and is continuously working towards creating a pathway for more seekers. With years of exposure to spiritual practices like yoga, reiki, and personal development interventions like coaching, she is working in the Organization Development and Leadership Development space. She can be contacted at bhuvaneshwari@teamthink.co.in for arranging Positive Energy training and Coaching sessions.

Tailoring to Empowerment

The impact of these training classes is not as simple as she portrays it. Young, adolescent girls trained by her were able to join reputed companies.

Women empowerment programmes are sometimes claimed to be reiterating the very gender stereotypes which must be done away with. Common in this context is the idea of training women in tailoring and providing sewing machines to women as a livelihood opportunity. Empowerment has to start from home, however, livelihood opportunity must be supported by other measures to ensure that women realised empowerment.

Ms S Kalaiselvi, Founder Survo Trust in Kancheepuram, also had to resort to the beaten track. Having failed in her class 10 exams, she had no other option, but to take up tailoring classes. Well established in her village, she decided to train women like her who had no other opportunities here. "Most of the men were alcoholics and hardly shared their income for household expenditure. Women, with no source of income lived in a deplorable state and needed help. All I knew was tailoring and so initiated training classes for women," says Kalaiselvi.

In early 1994, Kalaiselvi led a movement with families affected by alcoholism and presented a memorandum to the District Collector, condemning the liquor shops in the village. "Young girls were raped and the women who participated in the movement were threatened for life. We all faced threats. But it was a phase that soon passed away as district authorities acted on our memorandum and removed all the liquor shops from our village," she says.

The impact of these training classes is not as simple as she portrays it. Young, adolescent girls trained by her were able to join reputed companies. Older women, usually earned from their homes. The cycle of income generation among the women and its impact on households encouraged Kalaiselvi to update herself and all her other students so that what they learnt was always resonant with market needs. She was conscious not to create a divide between market needs and the skills of these women, so that it was easy for companies to recruit from other places/communities. "Women from my village could not afford missing such an opportunity," she insists.

Kalaiselvi undertook a course in Fashion Technology from the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) in Taramani. "I learnt the complete chain of processes involved in the garment industry, beginning from buttons to packaging. Now, there was more to teach and our contacts brought in more trainers," says Kalaiselvi who soon expanded the



operations of Kalai Training Centre in 1999. Later, in order to reach out to more women and run a full-fledged training programme, Survo Trust was established in 2006. With an organized set up, Kalaiselvi feels that reaching out to women through community structures became easier. SHG women were also trained and local women were groomed as trainers. Before the trust was established, Kalaiselvi charged a nominal monthly fee of Rs.50 per month from every trainee. Once the Trust was in place, courses were offered free of cost and sponsors were roped in to cover the costs incurred.

Suggested by a friend, Kalaiselvi enrolled in CSIM's SEOP programme at Chennai in 2015. "I learnt NGO management in depth and adapted it to the needs of the village. I realized the momentum of my work, its potential and most importantly, the possibility of engaging in other initiatives as an

organization," says Kalaiselvi.

Besides women empowerment, Kalaiselvi is deeply concerned about protection of child rights as conventional practices like child marriage not only affected children's health, but also their decision making power as they grew older. The fact that 1098 – Child Helpline was not promoted actively, according to her, was a bad sign. Women from Survo Trust have been actively involved in promoting awareness on legislations against child marriage, childline. The Trust has stopped child marriages and also admitted victims in schools to help them complete their education.

As a member of the Child Rights Committee in her village and other federations, Kalaiselvi also trains women in other villages to act against child marriage and other oppressive practices. Given the presence of Survo trust and its influence, authorities from the Forest

I learnt NGO management in depth and adapted it to the needs of the village. I realized the momentum of my work, its potential and most importantly, the possibility of engaging in other initiatives as an organization,

Department invited Kalaiselvi on board to promote awareness on the significance of increasing water table for agriculture. As part of such programmes, she also organized plantation drives across villages.

The Trust also runs night schools for poor children who cannot afford tuition classes. Completely run by volunteer support, there are now five centres benefitting over 60 students. "Initially there were 10 centres, but we could not manage them due to lack of volunteers and resources. Raising funds to keep the programmes running is the next big responsibility we have at the Trust," she emphasizes. Children and women are also taught basic computing and Kalaiselvi dreams of opening a full-fledged computer training centre in her village in the future.

—ShanmugaPriya.T

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility has come to a center stage and is the concern expressed by many countries, including India. This brings about the role that the corporates can play while exercising their responsibility in the social sector. The corporates are not equipped to identify the opportunities and formulate a plan and execute it in order to fulfil their Corporate Social Responsibility. Social responsibility is generally in the domain of government, private sector, and the NGO sector. The first two, being public sector and private sector, locate NGOs who are actively involved in social interventions and deliver the social responsibility through them in the absence of a proper framework or mechanism to deliver it themselves.

It generally appears that there are a few people, maybe from the Human Resources department allocated full time or part time to monitor such NGO activities. This approach is not going to give the full impact expected out of such initiatives. Therefore, there is a need to develop social entrepreneurship in the corporations at various levels.

The initial stage can be one of creating volunteers. Some corporates actually allow the volunteers to identify areas of social intervention which is to their liking, close to their heart, and also aligned with the corporation's objectives. They give the volunteers a maxi grant of money, the other part being donated by the volunteer himself or volunteers themselves. This process stimulates a meaningful social entrepreneurship quality in whatever the volunteers wish to do.

The summation of such volunteering work will essentially reflect the CSR activity of the company. This amounts to in-outside relationships. The "in" corresponds to the volunteers who are already employees of the company, i.e. internal resources, and "outside" are the recipients of such an interaction which manages the gaps, i.e. identify, as existing in the beneficiaries.

Similarly over a period of time like in-outside there can be out-inside. Out-inside means the requirement originates from outside people who are in the community or society in which the corporation is functioning and their social citizenry evolved a requirement of the community or society to bridge a gap and thus offer enumeration of the problems that society or community is suffering from. They take part from outside with the corresponding or equally capable inside initiative to deliver and achieve the impact expected of this initiative.

This is a pattern in which several corporates are functioning in the CSR area. Instead of volunteers from within some corporates create a Trust which is equivalent to a CSR programme and give the Trust the responsibility to secure some of the CSR objectives of the company, periodically review the activities, measure



the impact, and report to the board.

This occurs in companies who have already created awareness of their corporate being a corporate social citizen. However, in order to have this initiative pan-India the Indian government through the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has made it mandatory for corporates to allocate a sum equivalent to two percent of the net profit of the company each year to be spent on CSR activities. Maybe, it is required later to incorporate the objectives and activities and the money spent in the annual or bi-annual reports that is brought out by the company, filed with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and also sent to various stakeholders, employees, donors and also the shareholders.

So, with this background there is going to be very large number of companies which are profit making both in public sector and private sector. Find out how much money they have to contribute to CSR over the year and identify how this money has to be spent and monitored in the various schemes that the corporate has launched. This will be truly a methodology of reporting and analysis thereof and will structure the future path for the CSR program in consultation from stakeholders, primarily the shareholders in

AGM, to get their views on how the programme can be effectively conducted in future. This is because we also bring to the attention of the shareholders that the money that is allocated for CSR is actually something we take away from the shareholders, which otherwise would have been given as a dividend on the shares.

So, qualitatively this processes will ensure that the shareholders feel that they are contributing to the CSR and the company is doing it on their behalf. Therefore, over time they will positively endorse this activity and is of interest of the shareholders. The shareholders actually acknowledge and agree to this process even though it is a regulatory process. All these are likely to happen!

With the corporates being in business and the business objective is to either give service or sell products out of manufacturing to the consumers and make a net profit at the end of the accounting period, the net profit becomes a disposable surplus and is allocated to various heads. These are called reserve of the company which stays in the company's books which can be used later when circumstances demand as an internal resource.

The second one is to declare dividends which will be a pay out from the

corporates to the shareholders. The shareholders are public at large and also individual shareholders who own different levels of stocks from controlling stocks to non-controlling stocks in different denominations so that those people get allocation of surplus funds.

Now, CSR will get their recognition in another form of two percent of their net profit as allocable to CSR activities. In other words, corporates are slowly coming to the belief that they are also triple bottom line and not a single bottom line as seen originally by people. Earlier, the net profit was the only bottom line for corporates, but now the net profit will reflect the economy of the company.

The CSR activities contains two other heads i.e. equity and ecology that are exercised by the company. For instance, the society, community, and various stakeholders are considered and treated equal in delivering activities. Finally, they will also need the report on how ecologically sensitive the corporation is in terms of waste production, waste disposal, and recycle of waste.

How you treat the planet — environmental or ecological attitude of the company in conducting the business — will be in such a way that they are in conformity with the standards that have been laid down by world organizations as well as national organizations with regard to ecology management. The CSR activities really make it possible for corporates to think differently from a single bottom line to a triple bottom-line. The triple bottom-line is expressed as 3Es: the Ecology, the Economy and the Equity. Economy is not only to the immediate stakeholders of the company, but also economy that uplifts the employees and affects the people who are living in the community or the community in which the corporate is functioning or the society in which they are serving.

All these people also see that this impact is making a contribution to add richness to their lives, or in other words they are able to contribute more to the GDP and they are also contributing to the happiness because of the Ecology, Economy and Equity.

There will be a total impact of the stakeholders living in the community and in CSR that is delivered by the corporates. However, as corporates — where they are now and where they are starting — is one where they do CSR because of the regulations.

There is no way we can avoid it. Many companies will say this is an inevitable punishment on them and therefore they are doing it. But, subsequently by creating the social entrepreneurs within the company and outside, there will be an entrepreneurial spirit that will prevail finally in social responsibility of the corporate so that the corporate will begin to behave as a good corporate citizen, just like a social citizen and social entrepreneur.

The corporate will also become an entrepreneur not only in business, but also in social entrepreneurship and society related issues. They will get eventually very competitive in their line of business. They will have one up-man ship in whatever they do and it will be recognised by the community at large. They are doing their best at all times and are raising the bar in doing their best year after year so that the benefit flows into the society.

In order to do the best in the community, they have to be innovative. In other words there is a pressure, because of the CSR activity, constantly on the corporate to innovate and create. In other words the R&D work and the continuous improvement in their processes and methods of delivery are so much engrossed in bringing fruits of competitiveness into the bottom of the operations.

They will get competitive strength from the business. It is not give away, but also there is a takeaway for the corporate in whatever they do. The take away is the competitive strength. The competitive strength gives the sustainable position for

the corporate and its growth or expansion.

Organizations like CSIM and SAN, India have to aggressively interact with the corporates which are covered under the CSR Act. One can find out from the previous year's balance sheet from the Company Law, how many corporates are eligible for CSR spending and from that you can take some names to propose creating of social entrepreneurship within the company.

You can call the social entrepreneurs inside the company as social intrapreneurs because they are internal entrepreneurs and selected people become the core team. This means that you are giving them human capital to implement CSR and you will also structure a framework for social audit.

If there is a Social Audit framework, we can also train some social auditors within the company to serve as internal social auditors. Social Intreprenuers and Social Auditors will be created in order to deliver the CSR programmes that the board has approved.

They are also seeing that this is an

integrated approach to business strategy. It is not a standalone thing that you would do because of regulation. Instead, it is something you do because you see much value in doing that, it gives you an opportunity to be innovative and creative, and you intertwine the social strategy with the business strategy. One is not at the cost of the other, but it is for positively reinforcing the other.

So CSR, CSIM and SAN, India should be able to offer a programme to select corporates in strengthening their CSR framework so that they can out source it to an NGO or do it themselves through volunteering. The companies will be able to show their work in such a way that when a social audit is conducted, the exact impact made is in conformity with the organisation's original mission.

SAN, India can also facilitate the corporates write their mission, vision, strategy, objectives and activities and outcome and indicators which is part of the social audit framework. We need to therefore participate with the corporates from the start. This may be a hard sell

initiative, but the corporates should enjoy doing their CSR and not take it as an unavoidable burden that has been imposed by the government.

It is an integrated way of working so that we can tabulate all the information, assess the impact that it makes and compare it with the original intention and assess whether it is integrating with their business strategy.

Social strategy and business strategy are not two different silos, but integrated. When we empower the internal group, we will be able to assess, innovate and make this integration useful as a business tool or a business strategy for the corporate.

It is how the government used to say in the past that corporates should do R&D for technical innovation. The money spent in R&D is tax free. Likewise, this is a social R&D. It is being integrative, innovative and creative in approach, so that it would actually make the business more competitive than before. It allows a company to grow not only in stature or image, but also in its own bottom line.

—P.N. Devarajan

Loyola Institute of Vocational Education - LIVE - Loyola College & Centre for Social Initiative and Management - CSIM offers

Certificate programme in Social Entrepreneurship

SEOP orients the basics of Proposal writing, Fund Raising, Management, Communication techniques, Social accounting & audit, and leadership skills. A combination of theory as well as field visits forms part of the curriculum.



Course timings:
2 PM to 6 PM on Saturdays
Venue:
Loyola College, Nungambakkam,
Chennai - 600034.



Course Fee: Rs 6000+ 15% Service Tax
Next Batch starts on 20.8.2016



Faculty comprises of eminent academicians, social entrepreneurs and management experts.

FOR REGISTRATION AND ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT

**LIVE Department, Loyola College at 9789016557 / 7708810620 or
CSIM at 9884700029 or 9840194810.**

For more information, write to livecsim@gmail.com or visit www.csim.in

The Development Buzz



The organization delivers Self-Shakti—a free personal development program that includes elements of financial literacy and life skills to rural women at their doorstep through a travelling bus.

When Dave Jongeneelen, the Founder of Better Future, a purpose-driven consultancy, thought of offering personal development programs to people in rural India, he had no idea how he would do it. His experience in Africa had taught him that people in the rural countryside were as enthusiastic about developing leadership skills and reaching their potential as their urban counterparts. But would a leadership program work in rural India? How should such a program be designed? What should be its objectives and how should they be accomplished and measured? Dave had more questions than he had answers.

As luck would have it, Uthara Narayanan, a young social entrepreneur, was looking for some answers herself. Specifically, to the question “How do people lift themselves out of poverty?” So was Suresh Krishna, the head of Grameen Koota Financial Services Pvt. Ltd., a microfinance institution that offers collateral-free loans to rural women. Suresh was questioning whether micro-lending should be supported with capacity building to help women see real impact. Inevitably, their paths crossed and the idea of Buzz was sown.

Uthara co-founded Buzz India in 2012. The organization delivers Self-Shakti—a free personal development program that includes elements of financial literacy and life skills to rural women at their doorstep through a travelling bus. Why women? Because women are naturally inclined to collaboration and knowledge sharing. They constantly strive for a better tomorrow for their children. They also have inherent leadership skills that remain largely untapped because of their own reticence to lead.

In rural India, women display extraordinary strength and resourcefulness to overcome the challenges of poverty every day. They are leaders in their own lives. However, they live for the day. They have no long-term plans. Their dreams are unrealized and often even unspoken. Self-Shakti helps them articulate their

dreams and build concrete financial plans to achieve them. The objective of the Self-Shakti program is to change rural women’s attitude toward poverty by changing their behaviour toward money. For instance, in most rural households, the women have no idea what the household income or expenditure is—even though it is they who run the house. They want to educate their children, build homes, start businesses but have no planning or financial management skills and no access to quality information regarding federal and state rural development schemes from which they can benefit. As a result, they continue to live hand-to-mouth, day to day.

“Financial inclusion by itself cannot solve the problem of poverty,” says Uthara. “Giving women access to ready credit without equipping them to manage, invest and grow their wealth, will only lead them to debt traps.” Self-Shakti includes modules on asset management, communication and conflict resolution skills, daily money management and long-term financial planning that helps women understand that they control money and money does not control them. A 10% random survey that Buzz conducted on women who participated in the Self-Shakti program revealed that 95% of them moved away from private moneylenders after the program and over 50% of the women increased their savings by more than 50%; as many as 13% became first-time entrepreneurs.

Poverty is not just a lack of money. It’s a “lack” at many levels—lack of access to education, health, skills, power, inclusiveness—that establishes a mindset of “lack”. It keeps people poor. “We came across many situations where ‘leadership training’ could play an instrumental role in shifting their perspective from “lack” to “possibilities”. But, we can’t sell the idea of leadership in rural areas where people, especially women, are preoccupied with fulfilling basic needs. Money is always the first priority, so we used the route of financial education around which we built the

personal development program”, says Uthara.

Because of Buzz India’s heuristic approach, the Self-Shakti program has evolved over several versions to its current form. Local insights and lessons from experiments in regions like South America and Africa helped build the curriculum. But, it is a continuing education program for us,” says Uthara adding that “Ground research and surveys are an integral component of our Operations. We learn a lot from every annual community survey that we conduct and where necessary, we revisit whatever aspect

within the community. The community engagement program is structured to achieve specific objectives. The Buzz Gelathi’s mandate is to help women maximize the benefits of the Self-Shakti program in their lives. Each Gelathi is assigned a community of 200 to 250 women with whom she engages over a year in order to achieve the program’s goals. She is supported by Buzz India with knowledge, skills and tools to execute her role. Buzz India intends to develop every Buzz Gelathi into a community influencer who can then take on the mantle of leadership by inspiring her women to work towards a shared development vision for their community.

By 2025, Buzz India hopes to have delivered its Self-Shakti program to one million women in rural Karnataka. Uthara is, however, quick to clarify that while reach is important, the organization is deeply invested in impact. “Women should become problem solvers in their communities. They should become financially secure. They must have the courage to dream of new possibilities and the confidence and know-how to realize their dreams,” she says. “There was an Anganwadi teacher who participated in the Self-Shakti program. When she came to the program, she wasn’t able to feed her family without her neighbors’ help. She was so inspired by Self-Shakti that she resolved to become financially independent and live with dignity. She worked with her Buzz Gelathi who encouraged and mentored her over several months. She made significant changes in her lifestyle, behavior and attitude which helped her save enough money to buy a cow. Now, she has an income from dairy farming, manages all her expenses and even saves for the future. She’s just one of several such women who have become aware of their own strengths and turned their lives around after attending our program. That’s the kind of impact we’re looking for and we’re confident we’ll get there,” signs off Uthara.

—Shanmuga Priya .T



needs revisiting—whether our operations model, our curriculum or our approach.”

Buzz India is now in its fourth year of operations. There is a greater urgency to establish long-lasting impact. As with all social projects, sustainability is critical and sustaining behavioral change is a huge challenge. “We appoint community change agents to drive and sustain change,” says Uthara. Buzz Gelathis are women who have participated in the Self-Shakti program and can show measurable impact in their own lives from implementing Self-Shakti. They become Buzz community ambassadors and mentors





Launch of PGDSIM at CSIM Chennai



The 16th Batch of the Post Graduate Diploma in Social Initiative and Management (PGDSIM) course was launched at CSIM Chennai on 16th June 2016. 17 participants enrolled in the programme. The Chief Guest for the event was Mrs. Rajashree Natarajan, COO of Cognizant Foundation. Speaking on the occasion, she said: “CSIM has been rendering yeomen service in the field of Social Entrepreneurship and I wish each one of you to excel like the Asoka Fellows whose profile is displayed in your class here.”

Ms. Marie Banu delivered the welcome address and Ms. Maheswari, CSIM Alumnus shared her experience and encouraged the students to pursue the programme diligently.

Ms. Rajashree Natarajan and Latha Suresh distributed the welcome kit to the participants. Alumni and faculty were also part of the event.



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. www.csim.in

Contact Persons:

Ms. Marie Banu, Director, Chennai @ 9884700029

Mr. Ramesh Balasundaram, Director, Bangalore @ 9845211311.

Mr. K L Srivastava, Director, Hyderabad @ 9912656112

Dr. Madhuri. R, Head, Coimbatore @ 9840222559



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

For more information, please contact Ms. Latha Suresh, Director @ 92822 05123 www.san-india.org

From Child Labourers to Entrepreneurs

Elimination of child labour is more a contest of strategies as the institutional and legislative responses laid down by the State were in themselves not adequate to transform the situation. In spite of the UN conventions ratified and the national legislations passed, contextualization of issues in every community has been a challenge and small scale initiatives by different organizations have promised a better tomorrow.

Raza Educational and Social Welfare Society in Bangalore also adapted its own strategy and demonstrated the impact. Established in 1994, RESWS believes in 'development' as a participatory process. "We try to help the deprived understand their situation objectively. It has to start from here to elicit their meaningful participation," insists Ms Benazir Baig, Founder Secretary, RESWS. "I lived a life of facilities. Father was in the Air Force, so life in the quarters was all equipped and pleasant. Once in Bangalore, the conditions in which children worked shocked me. I had not witnessed this before. I easily bought a chocolate for ten rupees, while children had to work through an entire day to earn that ten rupees," says Benazir, who then set on to explore child labour.

Children, she emphasizes, are not the reason for the plight of poor families, but are pushed to take up responsibility on their shoulders. She began with evening tuition classes for child labourers where she hoped to introduce basic literacy. "The children took six months to hold a pencil properly. Children needed an eco-system of support services to help them come through these tough times," shares Benazir, who lamented the challenges in rescuing child labourers. According to her, the most critical part of their work was to make children believe that they all had their inherent capacities. Children were acquiescent with their lives and hardly looked forward to a change. They were so busy at work and worked very hard that they hardly had an opportunity to imagine lives without the arduous work.

Poverty is seen as the root cause of all problems. Therefore, to eliminate child labour, RESWS decided to work with the mothers as well. Women empowerment programmes helped encourage women to question the lives their children led and promote education, as the ensuing chain of impact not only ensured economic progress, but also inculcated life skills.

"Getting them to believe in this was a challenge, because education would lead to their children not being able to earn for the family. The change in this attitude is apparent now and communities understand the



significance of 'moving forward'," shares Benazir.

RESWS runs non-formal schools under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) where rescued child labourers, street children, school dropouts and out of school children are taught basic reading, writing, and then mainstreamed into regular schools. The Excellent English School established by the society has played an instrumental role in the process. Children could experience quality education, along with training in life skills and computers. The school follows the State syllabus and can host a strength of 600 children from kindergarten to class 10, every year.

RESWS runs non-formal schools under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) where rescued child labourers, street children, school dropouts and out of school children are taught basic reading, writing, and then mainstreamed into regular schools.

There are also vocational training programmes for school students and young wives/mothers. While the students group are taught computers, spoken English and personality development, women are trained in tailoring and embroidery as they had no employable skills earlier. To visualize them as breadwinners who could invest in children, ensuring that at least one adult in the family earned, it was essential to equip women with some basic skills. As families often denied women the possibility to going out for work, training them in tailoring/embroidery gave them the space to establish and operate small units from their own houses.

RESWS is now embarking on a new journey. Entrepreneurship programmes for the youth have been introduced in collaboration with the Scotland Youth School. Candidates will be trained in entrepreneurship and their new businesses will be funded through the programme. They will also be provided assistance in management of the businesses. "This is a new beginning for all of us. 20 students who were subjected to a life of vulnerabilities have been shortlisted for the programme to be educated and supported to become an entrepreneur. I look forward to see new Tatas and Birlas grow from here," says an ambitious Benazir.

—ShanmugaPriya.T

Strategy...Do I need one?

Social entrepreneurs have no dearth of passion, zeal, action, energy that drives them. Yet, at times, when the idea scales up, it seems very difficult to execute and achieve the set targets. More so what works in the space the idea took roots may not yield results elsewhere. Also, very few entrepreneurs are successful in multiple fields they choose to work. Just like there are hardly a handful who have got a second noble prize, so also a few are in expanded multiple fields of intervention. The answer to this question lies in the attention paid to “strategy” and the ability to design and strategize differently in accordance to context, place and time.

Wiki says - from Greek στρατηγία strategía, “art of troop leader; is a high level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of uncertainty. This included several subsets of skills including “tactics”, siege-craft, logistics etc., the term came into use in the 6th century C.E. in East Roman terminology, and was translated into Western vernacular languages only in the 18th century. From then on until the 20th century, the word “strategy” came to denote “a comprehensive way to try to pursue political ends, including the threat or actual use of force, in a dialectic of wills” in a military conflict, in which both adversaries interact. Modern business strategy emerged as a field of study and practice in the 1960s. The essence of formulating competitive strategy is relating a company to its environment says Michael Porter. Now, Strategy as a word on Google search has over about 75,80,00000 links and material. That’s too much to even fathom. But why is this such an important and most used word and what does it mean for a Social Enterprise? Let’s review that a little deeper.

Strategy is like the floor plan of a building. If a space has to be utilized to the best, it involves a best design. Similarly, given the resources and recipients, how best the idea or intervention can be reached has to be planned and well thought through. Strategy is to be worked at three levels –

- Overarching meta level
- Project level
- Goal or task level

At the overarching meta level, the strategy is derived from the long term vision of the organization. This makes the formulation of Vision a must for the organization right at the beginning. The purpose for which the organization would exist and the evolution of the purpose has to be mapped. The strategy for societal interventions would be then aligned with the vision and the interim purpose of the organization.

At the Project level, the strategy is derived based on the mission of the organization. Mission is also the periodic



Strategy is like the floor plan of a building. If a space has to be utilized to the best, it involves a best design.

milestone that has to be achieved. The mission is SMART – an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound milestones.

At the Goal or task level, the strategy is derived based on the context, objectives of the project and targets to be achieved. This kind of level planning intern helps every function / process to have their strategy and then plan for each activity. The activity level strategy is the operational strategy which is being measured and monitored on a daily / weekly/ monthly basis.

When a strategy is crafted, it is not always one time exercise and only one option. It has to be dynamic, flexible and agile. It needs to cover all PESTEL aspects. (Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Environmental and Legal).

A classic documented example is how Wal-Mart which is highly successful in USA totally failed when it went to Germany. The Ginger beer that is most famous in Srilanka failed to be accepted in India as a regular drink because of the term ‘beer’. The failure was due to poor strategy and alignment to local situation. Many school development programs and health reach out programs that have maximum reach out in Uttara Karnataka have not been able to take off in North Karnataka to a similar extent. The strategy has to be reformulated and no one formula would work. Appropriate strategy and

methodology ensure long term sustenance and relevance. When the strategy is clear, dynamic situations can be adeptly handled. The new term coined in corporate is ‘GLOCAL’ – global with local customization. Similarly, all PESTAL aspects have to be taken into account by the social organization while designing their intervention strategy. It may include most importantly local field staff and other liaison persons who understand the social cultural background. The strategy for costing and branding may have to be localized. Legal and regulatory laws, taxes that are applicable has to be taken into consideration when it becomes international programs. Language barriers are most critical in people intensive social organization.

If these are not taken into consideration, it can put a big dent on the project execution. The social entrepreneur has to play a key role in understanding and arriving at the best strategy for maximum reach-out.

The head of the social organization and all heads of the branches, with their project managers along with domain experts become the strategy team. They need to document every PESTEL and project activities and get the buy in of the stakeholders. In dynamic environment being agile enables the organization to function seamlessly and optimally. Akin to war environment where at any given point

of time five plans are formulated for every strategy and different strategy with all loop holes studied and closed to ensure safety and success; in social organizations too should build more than two to three strategy and alternate plans for every strategy that will address all the possible blocks in project. All information has to be on finger tips and very clearly documented for effective management and operations.

To enable efficient strategy and planning there are agencies and consultants who aid in the process. There is also information available on governmental funds, availability of subsidy and privileges for certain sector and groups. For example, if a geographical location is explored in business they can refer to World Bank for information- <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/india/>. Some of the areas they cover are: Starting a Business, Dealing with Construction Permits, Getting Electricity, Registering Property, Getting Credit, Protecting Minority Investors, Paying Taxes, Trading Across Borders, Enforcing Contracts & Resolving Insolvency. There many such public information for an entrepreneur to strategize and take decisions. A good strategy would tap all the available privileges and resources effectively. The legal compliances are the most critical component which requires focus and authentic advice.

Strategy and Planning are hence most integral part of Project management. Recommendation is to have clear strategies for every act, get a SWOT analysis and tap the pros-cons for these strategies with optimal and best result for long term sustainability and progress of the organization.

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath and Prathaap B



Search



A neighbour found Nasruddin on his hands and knees near a lamp post, searching for something. The neighbour asked, "What are you searching for?"

"My key."

Now, both men got on their knees to search. After a while the neighbour asked, "Where did you lose it?"

"At home."

"Good Lord! Then why are you searching here?"

"Because it is bright here."



Explicit Learning

- A. We generally end up searching for things in the wrong places.
- B. Quite often we look for solutions in the wrong places.
- C. Solutions are always to be found where the problems crop up.



Introspective Learning

- A. What is the nature of 'Searching'?
- B. Where do I look for my solutions?
- C. How do I discover the root of my problems?

© Sampath J.M., Discovery 3rd edition, Insight Publisher, Bangalore, India, 2007

Inspiring Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

Maharshi was asked by an educated young man: "How do you say that the Heart is on the right, whereas the biologists have found it to be on the left?" The man asked for authority.

M.: Quite so. The physical organ is on the left; that is not denied. But the Heart of which I speak is non-physical and is only on the right side. It is my experience, no authority is required by me. Still you can find confirmation in a Malayalam Ayurvedic book and in Sita Upanishad; and he produced the quotation (mantra) from the latter and repeated the text (*sloka*) from the former.

Someone enquired: Why is it said in scriptures that the Sage is like a child?

M.: A child and a Sage (*Jnani*) are similar in a way. Incidents interest a child only so long as they last. It ceases to think of them after they have passed away. So then, it is apparent that they do not leave any impression on the child and it is not affected by them mentally. So it is with a Sage.

A visitor asked how to realise oneself in accordance with Maharshi's instructions, contained in his text of Truth Revealed, verse 9, supplement. The difficulty was in controlling the mind.

M.: It is to be done by controlling the breath. If you practise it by yourself without other help, then the mind is controlled. Otherwise the mind comes under control spontaneously in the presence of a superior power. Such is the

greatness of association with the wise (*satsanga*).

"Can destiny (karma) ever come to an end?"

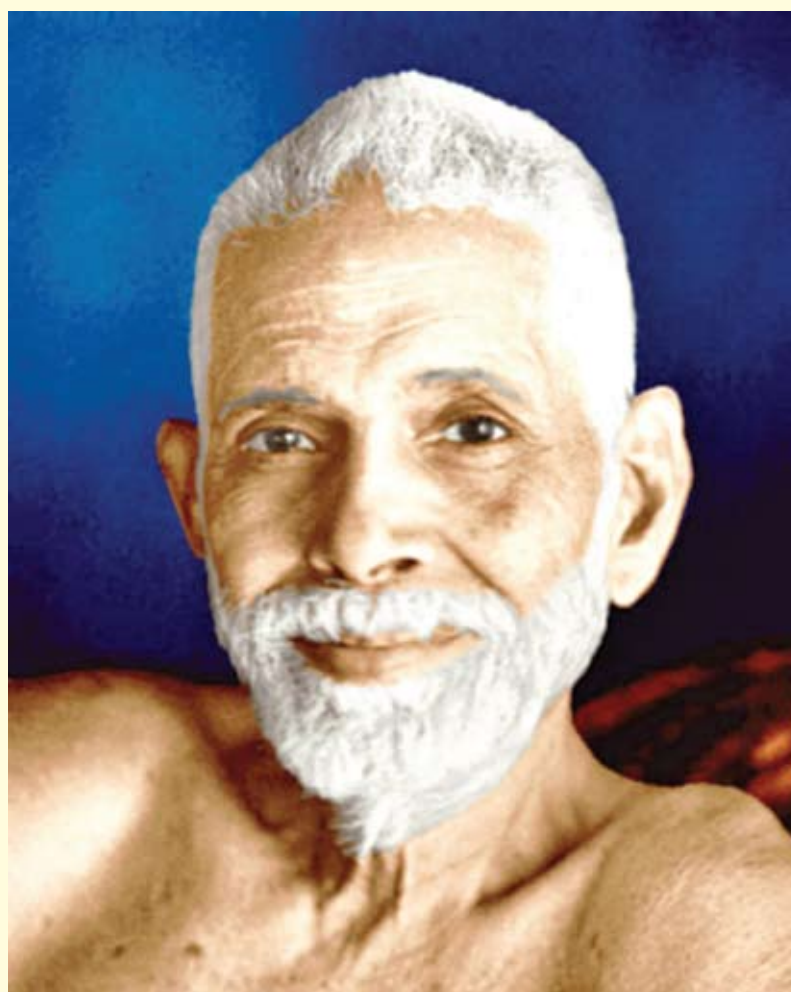
M.: The karmas carry the seeds of their own destruction in themselves.

A man asked the Maharshi to say something to him. When asked what he wanted to know, he said that he knew nothing and wanted to hear something from the Maharshi.

M.: You know that you know nothing. Find out that knowledge. That is liberation (*mukti*).

Mrs. M. A. Piggot, an English lady, who had read "Search in Secret India", came to see the Maharshi. The services of a disciple as interpreter were provided. There were many visitors at the time in the hall, including some ladies with their infants. The place resounded with noise. At length silence prevailed. Suddenly Maharshi, who seemed to be looking at infinite space, was heard to say softly, "Monkey"! A little baby was then discovered in the doorway (unobserved by the mother who was seated on the other side of the door) with a large monkey standing on his hind legs, who with both hands was fondling the child not hurting it in the slightest, both being at peace with each other in Maharshi's presence. When Maharshi's voice was heard the monkey jumped away adroitly and disappeared. The incident greatly impressed the lady.

—Source: Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi



“When a child is properly taken care until the age of 15, nothing can change him after that.”

Samuthirakani shares with Marie Banu why his films focuses majorly on social issues.



Samuthirakani is an Indian film Actor, Producer and Director who predominantly works in the Tamil industry besides appearing in a number of Malayalam films. He worked as an assistant to Director K. Balachander. His 2009 directorial *Nadodigal* was a runaway hit, which was later remade in three languages. He has acted in several films as well and is best known for his performances in *Subramaniapuram*, *Easan*, *Saattai*, and *Visaranai*.

Subramaniapuram showcased Samuthirakani as an actor with potential and *Nadodigal* helped him prove his mettle as a director. His recent film *Appa* is about the role of a father in his child's life. He has won the National award in 2016 for Best Supporting Actor for the film *Visaranai*.

In an exclusive interview, Samuthirakani shares with Marie Banu why his films focuses majorly on social issues.

Given that your recent film is titled *Appa*, can you tell us about your family and your role as a father?

I hail from Sethur, a village near Raja Palayam in Virudunagar district, Tamil Nadu. My family were engaged in agriculture. I lost my father when I was 15 years old. He used to say: “Money will not be of use at all times; one should earn the goodwill of people.” I bear this in my mind as I travel my life's journey – earning the goodwill of people.

The conversations I have had with my son who is studying in 9th standard is what appears in most of my films. In fact, he has directed a short film and released it in youtube independently. My daughter is studying in third standard. I am lenient towards my children and give them 100 percent freedom while my wife is strict towards them.

Your thoughts about the present generation. Are we giving them enough freedom?

It is wrong not to give freedom for our children. They need to enjoy their childhood—dance and play at the age when they should—so that when they grow up they can face the society rightfully. But, in reality, parents are designing the lives of their children and forcing them to do what they wish them to do. It is like a captive monkey who is made to dance to the tune of

its master. This is very wrong! Some parents decide on what their child should become depending on what their neighbour's children does. They wish for their neighbour's envy more than their own child's happiness. This is betrayal of the next generation.

What is the reason for most of your films to be focused on social issues?

I love my society! When I arrived at Chennai at 15, I met several people who were good—a police constable who was on his night patrol; a watchman who gave me space to spend the night; a hotelier who offered me a job, etc. Like this, there are many good people who are quiet. At the same time there are also not-so-good people who are loud. The world seems to recognize only the people who are loud.

This is the reason for me to produce/direct films like *Appa*. People who have not watched films for more than ten years are now watching my films. I am receiving calls from theatre owners and my film distributors across the state informing me that many school children in Namakkal are being taken to watch *Appa*.

I wish the next generation to lead a pollution free life. No one is living a 100 percent life! We lead a life filled with adjustments and corruption.

Films portray villains in a very admirable way. How do you think we can sensitise the future film makers?

I do not compromise on my films. I trust my audience and risk producing. Although other creators may desire to convey a message through their films, they are not in a situation to do so as they cannot afford it. Their producers demand assurance for their investment and have a formula which they want to follow.

People like me believe in breaking this formula. My films are all different, and the public are accepting it.

You have donned several hats – Actor, Director, Producer, and Dubbing artist. Which of them would you like to be identified for and why?

I want to learn all the techniques in cinema—including editing, art direction, and camera. Only then I can get fully involved in cinema.

Appa is going to be remade in 12 languages and I wish to direct all of them. The issue about parenting is global and I want the message to reach a larger audience.

Which of the social issues are your most passionate about?

Child labour and child abuse. When a child is properly taken care until the age of 15, nothing can change him after that.