

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

RNI No.TNENG/2013/52428 | Volume 5 | Issue 7 | July 2017 | 12 Pages | For Free Circulation Only | www.msdsrtrust.org



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IT'S ALL IN THE GAME

About OSCAR Foundation and its programmes



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

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programmes."**

An exclusive interview with
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From the Editor

Dear Reader,

The Charter for Physical Education and Sport adopted by UNESCO in 1978 states that every individual has the right to participate in sport. It emphasises that resources, authority and responsibility for physical education, physical activity and sport must be allocated without discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other basis, to overcome the exclusion experienced by vulnerable or marginalized groups.

Sports are key for holistic development and cuts across all human and social barriers. The benefits of sport are many – from physical and mental health to development of team work, and leadership abilities to building one's confidence levels. Sport also promotes equal opportunities for women and people with disabilities, besides addressing social inclusion and harmony. Paralympics is a case in point.

It is critical that engagement or interest in any sport or physical activity be inculcated from an early age to develop respect and understanding for lifelong engagement in professional or recreational activities.

There is a lot of research to prove that students who participate in athletics tend to perform significantly better both in school and in later life. Participating in sports, like playing in the school band or competing on the debate team, are cognitively and organizationally demanding activities that help convey self-discipline and leadership skills. This is especially true for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Many Non-Profit Organisations are using sport as a tool to bring about social change. One such NPO is OSCAR Foundation who is featured as our Cover Story this month. We hope that many more organisations choose Sport as their focus area and enable individuals achieve their personal and community goals.

—Marie Banu

Editorial

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

Happiness

"Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions."

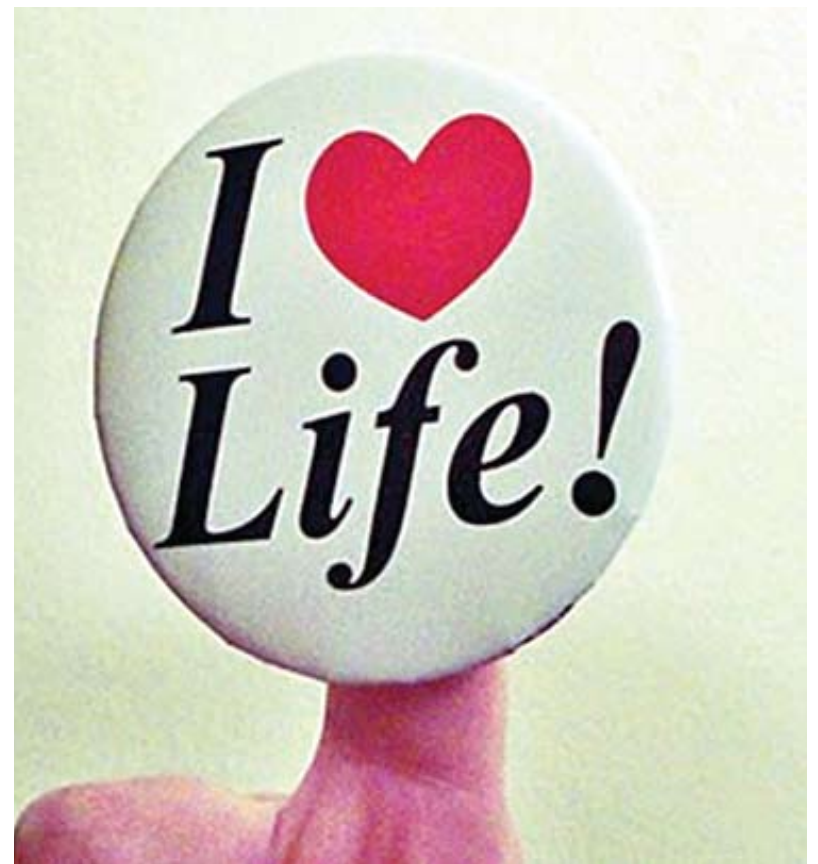
— Dalai Lama XIV

- One of the most quoted facts about happiness goes as follows:
- 50% of happiness is determined by your genes.
 - 10% of happiness is determined by the circumstances (like your job, your partner, money, clothes etc) in which you live.
 - 40% of happiness is determined by your actions, your attitude or optimism, and the way you handle the impact of life circumstances.

I am learning this in many ways now. Often, I have postponed my happiness—not doing things that I love, finding meaning and purposefulness in the things I do and so on. Now I realize that as I keep consolidating the "circumstances" I live in—for example: my job, my home, my relationships, I keep chasing quantity and not quality. A realization is that, happiness is in the quality—what are my intentional actions, in other words how am I exercising choice even in the way I am living in my life circumstances.

One does not need to do something new, however, become more mindful of what brings one happiness & keep connecting with that aspect even in the face of difficulties or even success. Do not allow success to mask the actual causes of happiness.

By quality, I mean making a choice or standing for something I want to create. I am beginning to



"stand for" something, it could be a cause for others or a quality of compassion, or of self-expression. The "standing for" helps me discover the choices, possibilities which are otherwise invisible to me. For example: When I do a project with a partner and we do not get the results that we want: before, I would be "unhappy" because I was betting my happiness on getting success; now, I am cultivating the practice of "standing for" acceptance.

It is not about "fixing" something

Yes, winning matters but not winning does not mean I do not deserve to be happy.

De-linking outcomes from happiness is helping in bouncing back and becoming resilient. Surprisingly, it is also getting me closer to the goals of success and winning, because now I have purposefulness beyond short-term gain.

Do you want to be happy? It is a choice you make. Explore, what intentional behaviors help you connect with happiness? Make place for that in everything you do.

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.

Agriculture and Livelihood

The implications of rural development programmes on agriculture and livelihood prospects in rural areas have been profound. More than anything, Mr. Dhananjayan, Founder of READ Trust in Thiruvannamalai, believes that they have had a strong influence on the decision making patterns of farmers. “Farmers have for long resorted to chemical farming to sustain their incomes from agriculture. It is the external factors that has helped to create an ecosystem to support the transition to organic farming. READ intends to be one such potential influence,” he adds.

Dhananjayan hails from Paramanandal village in Thiruvannamalai district. On completing his schooling, he joined the Electricity Board as a contract labourer. While his father thought this would lead him to secure a Government job, the issue of exploitation of contract labourers urged Dhananjayan to pursue his higher education.

Lost in thoughts of uncertainty, he learnt typewriting, as suggested by his senior colleagues. Later, he graduated in Botany and developed interest in teaching. It was during his college days that he discovered the orator and a theatre artist in him. “As friends and staff appreciated my eloquence and performances, I began to realise the impact one can make while communicating awareness messages to the larger public. I felt curious and motivated,” he reminisces.

After B.Ed, Dhananjayan was recruited as a teacher in his village’s high school. “I studied in a Matriculation School. I could not learn English and had no confidence nor any career aspirations. In fact, I did not even try to seek opportunities in other schools in my district,” says Dhananjayan, who was forced to look out for another job after four years of teaching due to his temporary posting.

He then worked as a Cane Assistant in the sugar factory at Polur. It was during these days that he observed agricultural labour and the patterns in rural livelihood. His next job was as a Farm Manager for an INGO which allowed him to understand the framework of sustainable rural livelihoods.

“I knew nothing more than fertilisers and pesticides to get good yield of crops. I was introduced to concepts of soil health, preservation of bio-diversity and organic fertilisers, pesticides, etc. The complete chain of benefits from organic farming to organic feed for animals amused me. I visited many farms to learn about organic farming and even trained farmers here,” he shares.

Soon, Dhananjayan decided to establish his own Trust to build support systems that can assist farmers in their transition to organic farming. “I wanted to go beyond



conducting training programmes and channelise livelihood options in such a way that ensured sustainability in the villages. It was important to help people identify local opportunities so that there are no foot loose migrations, nor disinterest in farming. Striking a balance between prioritising organic farming and other opportunities with scant resources was very challenging,” he admits.

Rural Education and Agricultural Development Trust was founded in 2000 and the need for resources required Dhananjayan to submit proposals to different agencies. Dhananjayan took the help of a local consultant to prepare his proposals. “It was the trend then. Proposals was the first phase of relationship between a non-profit organisation like READ and a funding organisation. I would go and narrate my ideas to any party who was ready to develop a proposal for us”, shares Dhananjayan, reiterating the apprehensions he had gone through. Fortunately, he developed communication skills during his work as a Farm Manager and this gave him the confidence to pursue formal training in managing his Trust.

The possibility of getting trained in writing his own proposals allured him. “A friend had mentioned about CSIM and their SEOP programme and this was just what I was looking for. I was surprised with the use of Vision and Mission statements in operationalising strategies. The analogy of a problem tree not only gave me clarity, but also helped me

articulate READ’s objectives in resonance with the interests of different funding organisations. I began to see how important my story was, to them,” he says.

Gradually, Dhananjayan used his expertise in organic farming to develop modules and training materials for farmers’ training. Having completed a Diploma in Production of Bio-Fertilisers and Bio-Pesticides from Annamalai University, he was able to structure the training programmes and group meetings corresponding to the needs of the farmers concerned.

READ also focusses on vocational training for women and youth in the villages. They are trained in tailoring, typewriting and cell phone repairs. Beautician courses are most popular amongst women as it allows them to earn with the comfort from of their home. “Women in the villages are more comfortable with opportunities that do not hinder their routine at home. They feel they can plan prioritise their time,” he adds.

READ has also trained farmers in production of soaps, bio-fertilisers and other products, thereby creating in-roads for local employment during the off-season. In order to make sure that the acquired skills were effectively used for livelihood, READ collaborated with stakeholders and encouraged entrepreneurship development.

In collaboration with the Entrepreneurship Development Institute in Chennai and National Institute of

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Hyderabad, READ organised skill training programmes in the villages around Thiruvannamalai. Further, women and youth were also encouraged to register with the District Industrial Centre to avail loans under different schemes and other allowances to set up their own business units. “It has been four years since this collaboration was initiated. We are proud to see young entrepreneurs talk about the benefits they have gained from Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme and Unemployed Youth Employment Generation Programme. I am happy to see them recognise opportunities that are available within reach and in turn inspire their peers,” he says.

Dhananjayan believes that self-sustainability in villages is a function of both agriculture and other livelihood opportunities that are in resonance with the local life. Enabling people to see these linkages has been a testing time for READ. Recognising the need for attitudinal change, he formed the Krishnalaya Cultural Group at READ and organised street plays and other interactive programmes to communicate key messages to people.

“Agriculture must thrive, not just survive. Organic farming is the future! READ will be instrumental in bringing about this change,” he says.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Digitising Payments, the Oxigen Way

Backed by a string of strategic investors like Citi Group Fund (U.S.) and Microsoft Corp., Oxigen Services, has evolved from introducing a retail wallet for individual telecom service customers to developing wallet services for banks, retailers and customers, with which it aims to enable financial inclusion and digitise payments in India

When Pramod Saxena founded Gurgaon-based Oxigen Services Pvt. Ltd. (in a joint venture with South Africa-based Blue Label Telecom) in April 2004, it wasn't just an idea moment which led him to turn entrepreneur. Rather, it was the wisdom he had gathered over his years of being at the helm of Motorola and Essar Telecom, which led him to identify a latent opportunity in India's digital payments space. To put his observations in perspective, let's run through some numbers. 2004 was the year mobile phone connections in India hit 30 million subscribers and overtook the number of fixed-line connections. Despite being a relatively small number when compared to China's subscription at close to 400 million, it presented promising potential for telecom companies.

As the number of mobile subscribers grew, there came the challenge of making payments and recharge seamless for telecom customers. As Saxena cites, the primary challenge lay in understanding how the recharge process could be made frictionless for customers. That's around the time he began toying with the idea of introducing a wallet service, especially for retailers. "There were many telecom service providers at that point and each circle (region) had a different mobile plan which also kept changing every week. This meant retailers had to deal with hundreds of SKUs (such as scratch cards) on a physical system and they couldn't keep score of how much money was being spent," recalls Saxena. In the second phase, operators like Airtel started recharge on phone. However, the drawback in this was, for every telecom connection's recharge, the retailer had to own the SIM card of that particular operator and keep a balance with each of them. "At a time when every operator is focussed on serving their own customers better, we thought of a way to make payments device agnostic for telecom service providers by bringing them on to a single platform," says Saxena.

It was this thought that led to the launch of the company's first wallet designed for the retailers in 2004. The wallet acted as an aggregator platform for service providers and a single point-of-contact platform for retailers. They could now access the mobile plans of any telecom provider by just paying a single amount on a wallet, which could be distributed across all players (by Oxigen), depending on customer recharge amounts/plans.



"Mobile phones were not smart enough back then, and GPRS and CDMA were still at a nascent stage. Hence, we created an intelligent PoS (Point of Sale) device, supported by a sim, to establish connectivity. This proved to be beneficial to the retailer who was at the core of providing this service to telecom customers," explains Saxena. With a round of funding from Citi Group Venture for US \$11.5 million the company established this as a successful model with 19 services being aggregated across 20,000 retail outlets (across a few states) by 2006.

"Citi's fund was the first external capital we raised since founding. The funds were channelised towards developing the retail engagement channel and laying the foundation for an ancillary business, Oxigen Infovision," shares Saxena. Oxigen Infovision was setup on the premise that VAS providers (at that point) weren't gaining much revenue share through telecom operators, hence this business could act as a content aggregation platform which provides customers direct payment access to VAS providers, where the former could pay for the service at the retail counter directly.

Despite the retail engagement model

proving successful, the company did meet with a fair share of challenges from the smaller, emerging players who tried to replicate the model and from the telecom operators themselves. "The telecom operators felt it might kill their distribution system and they were wary of us acquiring a very big muscle in that space. They were either restricting their products from being listed on the wallet or giving us lower margins. What they didn't realise was that we were focussing on creating an ecosystem for all services instead of eating into distribution," explains Saxena.

Against all odds

In 2008, a year before Paytm, Mobikwik, Citrus Pay and Freecharge began making their foray into the Indian wallets space, Oxigen Services, with a second round of US \$32 million financial funding from Microsoft Corp., launched Oxicash Wallet, its mobile wallet product for customers. "While a part of the funding was used for growing the business, Microsoft wanted to promote an online business with mobile wallet as a payment mechanism across all phone models," says Saxena.

Although it carried the advantage of

being a first mover, the company wasn't allowed to promote its product aggressively since RBI had not yet introduced regulations for it. To make up for this, in 2009, it capitalised on another RBI regulation which allowed retailers to become BC (business correspondent) agents. In just its first year, it aggregated 38 services on PoS, Web and SMS and crossed 60,000 touch points. "We were appointed as the BC for SBI and today, we are one of the leading contributors in terms of footprint and volume of business," claims Saxena. From then on, in the banking services space, Oxigen Services has grown by introducing white label merchant services on banking portals such as SBI, ICICI, HDFC, Citibank and the likes, connecting directly with NPCI for instant money transfer to over 60 banks (June 2013).

Shortly after, it also became one of the first companies to connect wallets with UID and introduced a better version of its PoS devices, called OxiSmart and Oxishaan, with the latter targeted at rural regions. "We did a demo of Aadhar for money transfer through a PoS device and completed a pilot in the Bihar and Odisha region for a biometric transfer service," adds Saxena.

The process of rediscovery

2009 also marked the emergence of heavily funded newer players in the wallet space and Oxygen Services had to consider its banking and consumer product verticals and redesign it to keep its business on a profitable growth path. “Apart from rebranding ourselves as Brand Oxygen, we re-launched our wallet business as Oxygen Wallet (earlier known as Oxicash Wallet) in late 2014 and positioned it as a product with a larger goal; to enable financial inclusion and digitise payments in India,” shares Saxena. Furthermore, it re-branded its money transfer service Oxicash Money Transfer as Oxygen Money Transfer Service. Although the company fell behind with the aggression displayed by Paytm and Mobikwik, it banked on the robust foundation it had established with the offline network of retailers and banks to push forward. “There are 20 million credit card and six million debit card holders in India and according to a data released by RBI, 90 per cent of debit cards are used only to draw cash. So, our proposition was, can we create an infrastructure where we can bring cash onto the digital platform?” reflects Saxena. And that, in turn, became the key

positioning for Brand Oxygen.

Since its launch in 2014, the wallet division has diversified into various segments in the offline and online market, to promote digital payments in the country. For example, in the ecommerce space, it launched an assisted ecommerce model for Big Bazaar called Oxygen Big Bazaar Direct. Through this, customers can order Big Bazaar products on the Oxygen Retail website and either have it home delivered (by Big Bazaar) or pick it up from their nearest retail outlet. It also launched Visa Prepaid, a virtual card powered by Visa, through which a customer can purchase or make transactions across any e-commerce site. “Today, each e-commerce player has introduced their own wallet and a customer can’t use one wallet’s money on another site. Hence, our prepaid card is designed in way that it is agnostic to service providers and e-commerce companies,” notes Saxena.

The money trail

Till date, Oxygen Services has raised over US \$65 million through promoter capital and external funding. South Africa-based Blue Label Telecom which entered a JV with the founders of Oxygen

Services made an initial investment of Rs. 20 crore in the business, which was followed up by Citi Group’s funding in 2006, investments by Microsoft in 2008 and an infusion of two further rounds of promoter capital totalling about US \$15 million.

More recently, in November 2015, the company began talks to raise US \$200 million from strategic investors, to build its new brand, Phi Enterprises. While the new division will manage the online business (the consumer wallet), Oxygen Services will handle the offline business, which includes money transfers, BCs, retail distribution and the rest. “We just completed the demerger and in the first phase we have raised close to US \$50 million, of which US \$10 million (received from our partners in South Africa) has already been invested in equity and the rest will be tied-up through an arrangement we are in the process of firming up,” shares Saxena. To raise the rest of the money the company has appointed an investment banker who, Saxena claims, has already begun talks with a few strategic investors.

Saxena bases the demerger to two factors; one, not all investors prefer to invest in both online and offline

businesses and two, the organisational culture and nature of business of online and offline is different. “For example, the online business is consumer wallet and more marketing driven. This requires more young minds in the business. Whereas, the offline business is distribution led and requires a team comprising an older crowd,” he notes.

Upon delving into his plans for the venture he reveals that the company is looking to create an ecosystem of online suppliers for its wallet and introduce a chat platform which will give customers frictionless access to many mom and pop stores. “We want to use our experience of working with small retailers to bring them to an online environment where customers can access them easily,” says Saxena.

With a clear goal of creating financial inclusion through its banking services division and customer-centric payments division, Oxygen Services has a plan in place to leverage on its solid foundation to compete in the long term with younger competition in India’s wallet space.

—**Madhumita Prabhakar**

This article was first published in TheSmart CEO Magazine (www.thesmartceo.in)

The Oxygen Sketch

2004: Founded the business as a JV with South Africa-based Blue Label Telecom. Infused Rs. 20 crore as promoter capital.

2006: Secured US \$11.5 million funding from Citi Group Fund. Went aggressive on retail wallet engagements.

2008: Secured US \$32 million from

Microsoft Corp. Launched first mobile wallet for customers.

2009: Became bank correspondent (BC first with SBI) and built connectivity to bank portals and international aggregators.

2011: Microsoft exits business. Stake equally sold between Blue Label Telecom and Indian promoters (Oxygen Services).

2012: A year since launch of SBI

Mobile Wallet, SBI MobiCash and improvised PoS terminal for retailers, OxiSmart.

Signed Yes Bank & ICICI Bank for BC. Launched OxiShaan, PoS terminal for rural India.

2013: Integrated with National Payments Council of India (NPCI) for instant money transfer through Oxygen’s Mobile Wallet. Rebranded as Brand Oxygen.

2014: Re-coined OxiCash Money Transfer Service as Oxygen Money Transfer Service and Oxicash as Oxygen Wallet.

2015: Aggressively leveraging on banking services and retail services division to fulfil larger goal; enabling financial inclusion and digitising payments across India.

2016: Actively seeking strategic investments to scale business.

**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.

For more information, please visit our website www.csim.in

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

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IT'S ALL IN THE GAME

The OSCAR Foundation is abbreviated to read 'Organization for Social Change, Awareness & Responsibility'. Today, the organization has several programmes, but with football as a connecting link and a route to enrolment.



Growing up in Cuff Parade's Ambedkar Nagar slum opened Ashok Rathod's eyes to a few of life's realities. Having witnessed, first hand, how a number of his classmates dropped out of school either on account of lack of interest, or the need to earn for their families, Ashok realized that a lack of focus on education was plainly apparent. "Most of these students also fell into bad company and became addicted to drugs," he recounts, "To make them responsible, their parents thought it best to marry them off at an early age, and this intergenerational cycle of

poverty and illiteracy continued." As a means of motivation, Ashok then began actively mulling the prospect of using football, to help these children become better individuals. "That's when I realized that sports could be used as a powerful medium to impart life-skill training to street children, and encourage them to keep studying," he continues. That's how the OSCAR Foundation began in 2006, with a batch of 18 students, with Ashok observing a one-percent drop in the dropout rate over the next year.

The OSCAR Foundation is abbreviated to read 'Organization for

Social Change, Awareness & Responsibility'. Today, the organization has several programmes, but with football as a connecting link and a route to enrolment. "It helps children aged between 7 and 22 who want to play football and learn to value education and handle social issues," says Ashok. It caters to school drop-outs, victims of child labor, child marriage, drug abuse, and juveniles. OSCAR provides regular football coaching for children and youth and through the sport, has tried to develop life skills to help them overcome these problems and

become role models for the community. "We try to build their confidence and complete their education," says Ashok.

The activities at OSCAR also include taking children to LIVE matches, helping them participate in various tournaments, enabling career guidance workshops, taking them out to movies and even overseas trips. But the questions remains: why

football? "With any other sport, you often require expensive infrastructure, which is not the case with football," says Ashok, "It also made sense for us to continue with the game more so because kids from under-privileged communities won't be able to afford expensive equipment." According to the OSCAR model, children engage in various activities through football. The creation of this opportunity, Ashok says, has created avenues for these children to display talent and skill. "Whoever signs up for football is provided a basic education so as to benefit from

these informal classes," he says. The foundation employs coaches for the football, with coaching camps spread across Mumbai, Delhi, Karnataka and Jharkhand.

By way of the OSCAR model, the organization currently works with 3,100 children across India. "We've also managed to strike a healthy gender balance," says Ashok, "Forty percent of our children are girls. It has been our belief that gender equality is a critical ingredient to availing the value of education. In the future, we hope to have a 50-50 gender ratio, at OSCAR." Currently, the organization has set

sights on training 170 girls and 288 boys as part of its 'Young Leader Training' programme.

Back to the football, OSCAR's coaching has produced some visible results. "Our youngsters go on to play for clubs, banks like IDBI Bank and Union Bank, organizations like the Western Railways and Air India, and even football clubs like Mohun Bagan," says Ashok, referring to one of the organization's alumni, Kishan Sulegai. "Kishan joined OSCAR as a senior player and is now working for the Income Tax department in Gujarat." Ashok continues, "Kishan has played the Santosh trophy, and

has also represented Mumbai FC." OSCAR's Young Leader programme has allowed half its youth take up coaching as a career, thereby choosing football as a profession and a career avenue.

More recently, three children from OSCAR went for special training in London, while 15 children from the foundation are presently selected for a UK School tour later this year. But Ashok's goals don't end here. "I now have my eye on scaling up the OSCAR programme in three more states — Goa, Rajasthan & Uttarakhand," he says. "At some point, we would like to reach out to 20,000 children across India, and in doing that, aim to train at least 3,000 young leaders." Partnerships like one with the Association of Indian Football Federations and collaborations with international football clubs like Manchester United are also on the anvil. The foundation also hopes to start a football Academy for underprivileged children, and thereby replicate the OSCAR model across geographies. "I hope to continue utilising sport as a means of education and empowerment, especially to address social issues," says Ashok, "And this is largely because I believe sport can be a medium that does not discriminate among people and instead one that brings people together." He continues: "At OSCAR we have our own curriculum, which is a life-skill curriculum that covers several social messages. The sport we play helps us provide the necessary support towards imparting this social message, and reduce the dropout rate in our communities."

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND ITS LINK TO SOCIAL ACCOUNTING...



I have worked with a wide range of social and community enterprises over the years and I am becoming increasingly convinced that an understanding of social capital can help significantly in accounting for how a social enterprise has an impact on its stakeholders and wider community.

I must admit that I was sceptical about the notion of social capital when I first came across it back in the late 1990s. But the more I found out about it, the more it appeared to make sense and nowadays I see social capital in all relationships between people, between organisations and between people and organisations.

The main refuge for social capital seems to be in the world of academia which abounds with articles and learned papers about what it is and how it works. This theoretical analysis has not really been adequately translated into practice. Arguably it should be, as I believe social capital can be useful in understanding community development, business relations, health and well-being and urban and rural regeneration.

In trying to get to grips with the concept of social capital, it may be useful to consider it within an historical context – albeit an overly simplified one...

Back in the 1960s there was a belief that communities could be developed through improving housing and the physical environment. In the 1970s emphasis was laid on instigating social change through the provision of what were called 'basic needs'. The focus in the 1980s was much more on helping people with developing their skills that would enable them to get a job – or a better paid job. In the 1990s there were an increasing number of community initiatives that tried to mobilise groups encouraging community capacity building. Linked to this was a recognition that organisational development can contribute significantly to community change. More recently there has been more emphasis on social and community cohesion and this is where social capital plays a major role.

So what is this thing called social capital?

Back in the 2000s I wrote a chapter in John Pearce's *Social Enterprise in Anytown* and described social capital as being 'that intangible "something" that exists between individuals and organisations within a community; the connections and trusting contacts that people make while going about their daily business'.

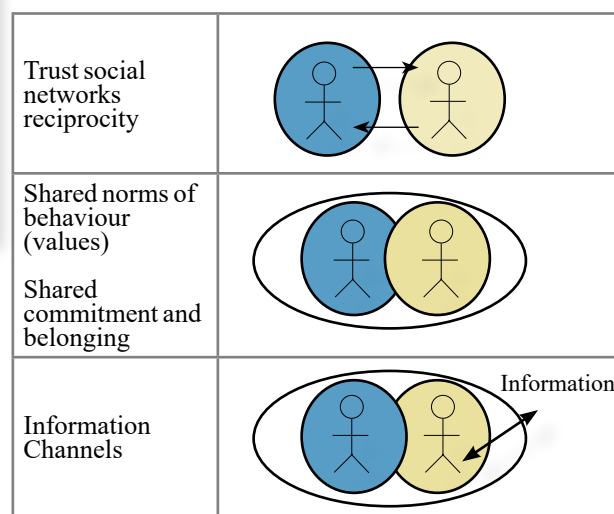
Following the work of the CONSCISE Project and work since, six elements to social capital have been identified and these fall into three categories:

Trust, social networks and reciprocity/mutuality are about the relationships between individuals and organisations;

Shared norms of behaviour (values) and shared commitment and belonging are about more than one individual and/or organisation sharing values and sharing a way of thinking

Effective information channels permit individuals and organisations to access information from outside and within the community

This can be summarised diagrammatically...



So how does all this work in the context of a community enterprise keeping social accounts and compiling a social report? (In this blog I shall use the term 'community enterprise' but much of what is said can equally apply to 'social enterprise' and voluntary organisations, and so on.)

One way is to carry out what we called a 'stocktake'. This assesses whether or not a community enterprise is committing itself to a social capital approach. The Social Capital Stocktake is a tool that any social enterprise can use in a heuristic way to ascertain the extent and depth of social capital and its generation within a community enterprise.

Here is an example of some of the questions around trust that could be included in the stocktake. The questions might be completed individually, then discussed in a group of those involved in the community enterprise with the aim of bringing about a 'healthier' score. ('5' means that one totally agrees with left hand statement; and '1' means that one totally agrees with the right hand statement).

In general we trust the organisations we work with	5 4 3 2 1	We are not very trusting of other organisations
We think that the organisations we work with are very much trusting in us and feel we are reliable	5 4 3 2 1	We do not think that other organisations trust us to deliver and be relied upon
We trust our staff and Board members to do things well on our behalf	5 4 3 2 1	Relationships between people doing work for us and on behalf of us is not based on trust

Very often community enterprises (and indeed others within the wider social economy) do not acknowledge social capital and dismiss it as 'common sense' or 'networking' or 'what we do

anyway'. I would argue that it is only when you take stock of social capital, that you begin to recognise it and understand its value to your community enterprise.

The above self-assessing stocktake could be part of a social report and could be used to recognise trends – while at the same time flagging up the importance of taking social capital into account in future planning.

The other side of this, is assessing levels of social capital within communities and then trying to work out whether or not a community enterprise contributes to those levels. This is much harder. People have developed a series of questions asking residents in a community how they would respond to a certain situation and then from these responses make a judgment of the levels of social capital within a community. Or alternatively others ask a series of questions to be answered by the wider community. Here is an example of some possible questions (the numbering applies as above).

People in this community are ready and willing to help others	5 4 3 2 1	People in this community are only concerned with their own lives
It is easy to get involved in community activity here.	5 4 3 2 1	It is difficult to get involved in community activity here.
People mix well across all social groups in this community	5 4 3 2 1	People don't mix well across social groups in this community

Back in the early days of social accounting and audit and especially when the practice centred around community enterprise, there was an expectation for a community enterprise to assess and describe the socio-economic profile of the area served by the community enterprise. In recent years, the guidance in keeping social accounts is to only include the community context and details on the community needs the enterprise will focus on.

There is also a question of attribution. How does one know that the raised level of social capital in a community, say, can be because of the actions of the community enterprise? This is difficult and it is best to assume that if the actions and objectives of the community enterprise are clear, and the levels of social capital reportedly rise, then it can be said that the actions of the community enterprise have at least contributed to the increase in levels of social capital.

All types of enterprises do not exist in isolation but as part of a web of interconnected relationships. In getting things done and in making things happen they should be able to tap into contacts and use good relationships to carry out effectively what they want to do.

There are, however, limitations to what high levels of social capital can do. It has to be used in conjunction with other forms of capital – financial, human, environmental and cultural.

Despite this, making an assessment of social capital generated and used by a community enterprise as part of a social report, I believe, is important. An analysis of the form and nature of relationships a community enterprise has with other organisations is crucial and can show where it should focus in developing and enhancing those relationships.

This link between social capital and the actions of a community enterprise can be reported within a social impact report – benefiting the enterprise in terms of future planning and resource allocation; and its wider community in terms of more cohesion and enhanced inter-relationships.

—Alan Kay
Co-Founder,
Social Audit Network, UK

Where every day is earth day

Terracotta products have been a part of human life since the Indus valley civilisation. They were used in pottery, sculptures and also to construct homes. Over the centuries, the use of terracotta has evolved and today terracotta jewellery is a fashion statement among the young and old. The aggregation of artisan groups from different villages across the country by many creative enterprises has kept this art form alive.

Colordearth is an eco-socio enterprise in Hyderabad that began from creating simple designs by its founder Ms. Hema Balakrishnan. “I never visualised that this would evolve into a social enterprise. When I began in 2003, I did not even know about this term,” says Hema, who was intrigued by the promise of clay while taking her kids to craft classes. She immediately joined the classes on terracotta jewellery and started making products for her family and friends. “I was overwhelmed with the appreciation and feedback. When I saw them wearing my terracotta jewellery to weddings and other occasions, I was motivated to do more. Thus, I began to see this as a business opportunity,” she says.

The evolution of Colordearth has a lot to do with Hema’s quick decisions. On recognising an opportunity, she immediately validated the feasibility and possible returns, the habit that paid off very well in the years to come. She trained two more of her friends, and the three women started producing a range of products—from eardrops to fashionable neck pieces.

“We were called Alankruthi then. We adopted the credit model to sell our products in stores. Eventually, delay in payments became a critical concern. It was a big lesson for us,” says Hema.

Having seen the potential of her venture, Hema decided to get in touch with other like-minded people who were into terracotta jewellery. “We had contacts from craft exhibitions, and also from the person who made electric kilns for jewellery makers like us. I was not alone! All of us had one issue in common—marketing,” she smiles.

In an effort to refine the model so that all women had their returns on time, Hema began to collaborate with different groups. A one-year sabbatical gave her the time to research all possibilities and refresh her contacts. She got back to her customers and sought their feedback. All this homework encouraged her to apply for the 10000 Women programme—a Goldman Sachs funded Initiative for Women Entrepreneurs in 2009.

While working on her business plan during the course, she researched on handcraft businesses and was awestruck at the concept of a ‘Social Enterprise’. “Alankruthi was a social enterprise. I



just didn’t know that,” exclaims Hema, who realised the need to tell her story in a different way. Very soon, she decided to start direct retailing from a mall in Hyderabad, during weekends. “From Alankruthi to Colordearth, from credit model to retailing - this was clearly a new beginning and revival that we were all looking forward to. We slowly moved from a weekend stall to a kiosk in the mall. All the while, I was conscious of the cost. Lower the cost, greater the profits and thus, a sustainable income for all the artisans,” she says.

Today, Hema has a network of 12 terracotta artisan groups from six states (Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Telangana) covering 200 artisans. Colordearth has come a long way and there is no looking back. Equipped with their own studio completely administered by women, the venture is very popular in social media circles.

“Working with women is empowering and at the same time challenging. Attrition is an issue that confronted us and we needed a model that provided a win-win situation for the centre as well as the women artisans. Therefore, every centre worked out different operational strategies that best suited the women in

Working with women is empowering and at the same time challenging. Attrition is an issue that confronted us and we needed a model that provided a win-win situation for the centre as well as the women artisans

their region. While in some production centres the women preferred to work at the workplace, many were also allowed to work from their homes. Local NGOs liaised with the women groups, distributed the raw materials, collected the final produce and delivered it to our enterprise. Adopting different strategies with each centre ensured that women were comfortable with this engagement,” reassures Hema.



Moving into their own studio, Hema and team faced a drop in sales. They could not spend on marketing and were disturbed by the uncertainty in retailing. “Many customers wanted us to share catalogues and also ship products to them. This meant that our stock for online and offline sales should always be intact and adequate,” she says.

With this kind of demand, Hema decided to establish a platform for online sales. Today, there is more offline sales than online, but the way Colordearth has taken up new channels has been very satisfactory for Hema.

Colordearth’s activity in social media also paid off when Hema was chosen to share Colordearth’s social media story at the Facebook India Ephany Council. “It has been an enterprising journey since 2003. Today, we have a movie made on us and when I show it to my artisan groups, their sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, and pride is inexplicable. The fact that Colordearth is capable of providing sustainable incomes to these artisans is an overwhelming achievement which always encourages us to go further,” says a happy Hema.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Nruthya Bodhini – Musings of an Artiste

11 – Tough lessons and the other side of life

Chooo...chuk..chuk...the train trudged from the New Delhi station towards Bangalore. Sadhana suddenly felt heavy and tired. The excitement from the up and down roller coaster ride of the previous one week had been too much to take. Now that the reality of home dawned in her, she had no inclination to talk to anyone but wanted to close her eyes and retreat. Sadhana climbed to the upper berth with her pillow and her diary. Sadhana found her best expressions and vent to feelings through pen and paper. Her diary has always been her most favourite companion through life. As she sat there silently, the week's events went past her like a flash back.

A week back... at home... *"Be careful. Stick to your friends. Eat on time. Do well. I wish I could come with you, but for my legs"*... constant rattling from Amma while Sadhana put the bags outside the front door waiting for the car pick up that took her to the railway station. *"Amma, you're not coming has nothing to do with your legs or ill-health. You also know that. No moms are coming with any girls. And I'll be safe. You have to trust me to know what to do. I am already 19!! Come on"*. However much Sadhana tried, the annoyance and frustration crept into her voice whenever her mom cribbed about her health.

A group of nearly 18 had left to New Delhi. They were all dancers and were going to represent Karnataka in the All India Cultural Festival. Manager Nagaraja was a firm but friendly person who was in charge of selection, training and conducting the tour. He was highly networked and connected to political and influential persons in art field. People strived to keep themselves in his good books all the time so they would get opportunities to perform. He was Uncle Kittu's ex-colleague who had left the organization to do the Art and Culture Managerial Job full time. His public relations skill, context sensitivity and manipulative mind had quickly grown him in the circles as most sought after Manager for art tours.

The kind of middlemen that we meet in all social organizations too are highly influential. They want to make the best



use of the opportunities as well as ensure service for social cause. But the danger of which way they will turn remains unpredictable. Since they know the untold and intricate ways for community reach and can turn the tables any which way, they become inevitable to social work. The debate for and against keeping middlemen remains for a long time as an unresolvable issue, especially in our country. But there have been certain commendable efforts in eliminating this layer using technology in the last decade.

By the time the train had reached New Delhi, clear groups and cliques had formed amongst the 18 people. Sadhana, Suju, Neetu and Gayatri had stuck together. Three dancers who chose to belong to none and were seen in every group, liked their role of carrying tales from one group to another.

The rehearsals through the day and programs in various places in the evenings kept the girls on their toes for over 13 hours a day. Nights were long with continuous chatter. Though with a mediocre start, by the third day Karnataka team had become sought

after group amongst other teams. The real finale was on the 6th day and everyone was looking forward to that. Bitter competition and cold wars were already forming amongst the members of the group. Amongst the dancers, some who were clear on benefits and outcome liked Nagaraja a lot; and some who were seeking straight forwardness and transparency hated him the most. But all wanted to be on stage and so were willing to be a part of Nagaraja's fraternity.

"Hey, where's my scarf? I can't find it? Oh, no I also seemed to have lost 100 rupees from my purse. I think someone has been stealing things from our bags," screamed Gayathri as she saw Suju and Sadhana walk into the room. Sadhana calmly said, *"See properly. It will be there in your bag."* Neetu with the latest stories always walked into the room whispering, *"Hey, girls, many more things are lost*

and they all suspect that fair looking girl, short and beautiful, who acts snobbish to be the one who has been stealing. Looks like she is expert in pilfering and loves doing it." *"She must be a kleptomaniac, compulsive stealing,"* declared Sadhana.

"Professor, please explain your usage of words," teased Gayathri.

Sadhana was the psychologist and professor for the girls since she seemed have a theory behind most things and would pull out information from her brain. It was a common

belief that academics and art

rarely went together. It was also a popular assumption that if you are in arts you must have been terrible in academics. So Sadhana's high academic affluence was seen as professorial in the group. Sadhana had a secret pride about her academic achievements. *"Let's complain to Nagaraja and also catch her next time,"* said Suju. This became an issue amongst the dancers that again divided



the girls based on their perspectives without being able to conclude why the girl stole things. Nagaraja had dismissed all this curtly by reminding them of the true purpose of the trip.

It is interesting how all other things can become priority and issues than the vision, the true purpose. When other things than vision begin to occupy the group there is a natural disturbance and derailment. For successful project the focus on vision is extremely important. There are chances of deviation, but as conscious keepers the leaders have to bring the group back on track.

"Sadhana and Neetu, I don't want you both to do your solo items this evening and in finale. Also one more group dance will be cut", declared Nagaraja to the four girls on the morning of the 5th day. "But, why Sir? We were really good last evening" asked Sadhana in shock. "You don't get it. Kavya and Sridevi will get limelight and it is the Minister recommendation. Also, the north Bangalore group will do extra item" replied Nagaraj curtly. He had no need to explain to these girls. "That's unfair and they are not well trained too. How could you allow this? You know we



have been practising and looking forward to solo item last one month. I am willing to talk and will protest this decision", Sadhana was angry and tears were threatening to fall down. "Look, just don't argue with me. I am the Manager and I decide who should be where. They are highly connected to

bureaucrats and we can't say anything. Just listen to me or you won't be performing other two items too" Nagaraja spoke firmly, dismissed the girls' petition and walked away. Sadhana and Neetu felt the world crashing in front of them. The entire effort of going to Delhi seemed futile.

They felt cheated. The true meritocracy had crashed showing forth another side of the ugly world that Sadhana had never seen before. Something inside her hardened that evening and it had been a challenge to pass the next two days with the group. Her self-esteem was questioned and the harsh ways of the biased world had hit her.

True value for meritocracy and honest dealings are a huge challenge for social entrepreneurs. Lobbying and corruption has had its ugly intruders preventing the true connect between donor and the recipient. Much of valuable energy goes in fighting injustice and creating pathways rather than creating robust ways of reaching help to the needy. Many a time the connections to power and kickbacks received are valued much higher than the intent, purpose and expertise of the social entrepreneur. This puts to question the tenacity and perseverance of a social entrepreneur to continue to exist and pursue their dreams of making this a better world.

To be continued....stay connected...

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath

Concern



It was time for the monsoon rains to begin, and a very old man was digging pits in his garden.

"What are you doing?" His neighbour asked.

"Planting mango trees," was the reply.

"Do you expect to eat mangoes from those trees?"

"No, I won't live long enough for that. But others will. It occurred to me the other day that all my life I have enjoyed mangoes from trees planted by other people. This is my way of showing them my gratitude."

Explicit Learning

- A. We derive satisfaction while working for others.
- B. We are in a way responsible for what tomorrow is going to be.
- C. It's our selfishness which prevents us from working for others.

Introspective Learning

- A. Who is responsible for the tomorrow we are going to leave behind?
- B. Why doesn't it occur to me that I should leave something for tomorrow?
- C. What is it that I am leaving behind for the generations to come?

“Governance is the key in NPOs, however good they might be in their finance or programmes.”

Dr. M. Kandasami shares with **Marie Banu** his impressions about the Non-Profit sector

Dr. M. Kandasami is a practising Chartered Accountant for over three decades, and Managing Partner of Kandasami & Associates, Chartered Accountants in Chennai. A Commerce graduate from Loyola College in Chennai, he has won several awards for academic excellence.

Dr. Kandasami's experience in the non-profit sector spans a wide spectrum of organizations, ranging from grass roots groups to Government and international agencies, including the United Nations Development Program.

His firm is involved in providing audit, FM capacity building and legal and financial advisory support to non-profits in India and several Asian and African Countries. He has contributed to the study on Charities Administration for the Planning Commission, Government of India and is a visiting/adjunct faculty for Management Institutions.

Dr. Kandasami is a well-known author and his book titled Governance and Financial Management in Non-Profit Sector Organisations is in global circulation. He is a sought after trainer and resource person at national and international seminars and workshops.

In an exclusive interview, Dr. M. Kandasami shares with Marie Banu his impressions about the Non-Profit sector.

Did you start your Audit practice with Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) or with other types of clients?

Actually, I had started my profession with corporate bodies and individuals who were involved in business, politics, judiciary, civil service etc., for their audits and taxes. Of course, It was exciting to deal with the above set of people.

I had a feeling that my life should touch other people's lives. I used to ask myself: "Am I doing the right thing?" It's around that time, few educational institutions, health and social work organisations approached me for professional help. This area was completely new, but their cause and service attracted me. In two to three years' time, I had more organisations approaching me with their request to establish accounting systems and for financial audit. From then, there was no stopping!

Many could not believe that from providing service to the high and mighty I went on to get involved with grass root voluntary organisations. But, I was listening to my heart! It was not an easy decision, but I enjoyed it.

What is your impression about NPOs in India?

NPOs play a vital role in our society touching every aspect of human life and



making it a sector by itself in addition to Government and Corporate sectors. They continue to evolve in philosophy, programmes, governance, financial systems, accountability, etc.

They have been shifting their paradigms from welfare oriented to facilitators of development, becoming rights-based, issue and theme based. At times of disaster, NPOs are the first to respond and provide timely support. Of course, like in other areas, there are black sheep and they may be on the increase. But, this should not undermine the work of millions of NPOs who are rendering wonderful service to our society. They have to ensure that the outputs of their programmes map with the needs of their target groups.

Collaboration of NPOs with Government and corporates are on the increase. It is high time that NPOs focus on good governance which has been a major finding in my recent research as well.

While there is so much discussion about Corporate Governance, there is very little engagement on NPO Governance, which is all the more critical, as they deal with public funds.

We learn that you have provided support to NPOs in Asian and African countries. What is your experience and impression of NPOs in these countries?

Yes, I have worked in other countries; 10 in Asia and 15 in Africa together with the Network of Auditors. In most of these countries, the NPOs are very effective and complement the work of their government.

A few needs are common in all these countries—good governance, transparency and accountability, and capacity building in terms of programme

and financial management and governance. The capacity building process is therefore path finding and not fault finding.

We understand that you work with a network of auditors to provide support to NPOs nationally and internationally. Can you tell us about this?

Many people say that Auditors find it difficult to work as a team. I have a very positive experience of working with a network of auditors for nearly three decades in India and other countries. They have been very collaborative and supportive and we have enjoyed working together.

That is why when we were working together, it was not just the sum of the number of auditors, but the synergy - in terms of perspectives, effectiveness of our intervention, and the clarity about our mission - that made us accomplish so much of work.

What inspired you to get involved in advisory role, training and writing books for NPOs?

I realised that the NPOs needed much more support than just audit, which is a statutory obligation that happens after the event. They required capacity building for establishing systems, compliance and governance.

National and international level organisations approached me for advice and I was happy to see my inputs reaching hundreds of organisations - not just in India, but also Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and Bangladesh - whom they supported. Although the laws are different in each country, the financial management principles are common.

Many organisations also requested for trainings and workshops for their Board, staff and advisory committees. There was a need for a toolkit on financial management which inspired me to write my first book in early 90's titled "Management of Finances for Non-Profit Sector Organisations".

I realised that financial management alone is not sufficient, and went on to focus on governance. It was an enriching experience. In mid 90's, I therefore wrote my second book titled "Governance and Financial Management in Non-Profit Sector Organisations", then a book on Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and Financial Management Capacity Building.

I also share my experiences with the Government agencies such as Income tax Department and Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and Management Institutes through my teachings.

About your Doctoral Degree focus on Governance of NPOs?

My clientele is largely Non-Profit Organisations. They range from grass root organisations to international NPOs on the one side; and on the other focus on all horizons in the social sector - education, social development, social enterprises, right based organisations, welfare bodies, etc.

Governance is the key in NPOs, however good they might be in their finance or programmes. There is very little literature available for NPO Governance in India. Thus, I wanted to pursue my Doctoral Degree to focus on governance. I had to source information from across the world. Completing PhD is just a beginning! There is much more to learn and the learning continues.

What challenges have you faced in the course of your professional journey, that too in a profession such as yours which is questioned for some of its roles especially these days. How did you manage to overcome the obstacles?

I learnt hard work from my parent's life experiences. My teachers in my school and Jesuits and Professors in Loyola College taught me values and discipline. My senior, where I completed my Chartered Accountancy, taught me integrity and honesty. Several of my well-wishers have been such a great inspiration.

My family has been very supportive for all my initiatives and efforts. Through these columns, I thank all of them for what they have been and what they are to me and thank God for giving me all the above opportunities.