

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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About Stree Mukti Sanghatana and its activities in Mumbai



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From the Editor

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”—Kofi Annan

Dear Friend,

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process which enables individuals or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. The inclusion of all sections of the society in the public sphere is critically important for any democracy. Empowering women is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families, and communities.

There is no denying of the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in almost seven decades of Independence, but they still have several challenges to face. It is ironical that a country, which has recently acclaimed the status of the first Asian country to accomplish its Mars mission in the maiden attempt, is positioned at the 29th rank among 146 countries across the globe on the basis of Gender Inequality Index.

Swami Vivekananda has quoted: “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.” The inclusion of “Women Empowerment” as one of the prime goals in the Millennium Development Goals underscores the relevance of this fact. Therefore, in order to achieve the status of a developed country, India needs to transform its women force into an effective human resource which is only possible through the empowerment of women.

Women should also realize that they do not take undue advantage of the special treatment or the laws that are made to prevent discrimination against them and to ensure that they have freedom and equality at par with men.

There are several NGOs that work for the cause of women empowerment. Some have been featured in this issue for your reading.

Marie Banu

Response—Ability



How to Respond?

Response-ability is the ability to respond rather than react in a situation. This is a choice we can exercise in our life. More often than not we are caught in excuses, blame or withdrawal, because ordinarily “responsibility” means duty, doing things the way you are expected to do them by people around us or because of the “rules of the society”.

The power to respond is a defining feature of humanity. Our response-ability is a direct expression of our freedom & our empowerment. Being human is being response-able. It is the ability to consciously and deliberately choose our responses with intention and care. We are not responsible for the circumstances; we are response-able in the face of your circumstances.

Though we are response-able, we tend to be in a place of reaction many times. This is a physiological process caused by the amygdala in the emotional part of the brain. The amygdala offers us the capacity for “flight-fight”

“We are not responsible for the circumstances; we are response-able in the face of your circumstances.”

when we face survival threats. However, the amygdala cannot distinguish between physical and perceived threats. So, we end up exercising “fight or flight” even in situations where we do not have any threat to our physical safety. In essence, we seek our “emotional safety” through “fight or flight” which is definitely not sustainable and creates a downward spiral.

Would you like to consider connecting to your ability to respond, in other words, “rest-digest”, to meet your needs of

emotional safety? So what would that look like in real life situations?

The next time you get into a conflict situation, a situation that can be emotionally intense, either at work or at home, remind yourself that you have the choice to pick your response, it need not be the habitual “flight or flight” reaction. The “fight-flight” reaction is programmed to come up when we experience something outside of us as life threatening. However, when we face an emotionally intense situation, the reason for the strong emotion is not outside, it is inside us. For example: having a difficult conversation with a colleague or your partner, you may be anxious but that is not caused because of your colleague, it is because you need this conversation to be respectful and meaningful. This understanding will bring you into the state of response-ability.

Start exercising your response-ability. Enjoy the freedom coming from that.

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.

Editorial

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

Women Empowerment to Social Development

Traditional and cultural barriers have discouraged women in many areas. By overcoming these barriers, some women have managed to achieve and emerge as leaders. Ms Haleema Begam, Founder of Rojavanam Arakkattalai in Tindivanam district, Tamil Nadu has confronted several struggles to be what she is today.

Born in Ulagapuram village at Tindivanam district, Haleema was brought up in Chennai and Pondicherry, as the family had to move between these cities to suit their business. “My father owned a printing press and also dealt with iron scrap merchandise. We had a comfortable standard of living, but as we had to adhere to traditional gender roles, I could not pursue my studies beyond class 10 earlier,” says Haleema who completed her B.Com degree two years ago.

“I am happy with the social skills and exposure that I gained while studying Diploma in Arabic in Trichy. Without that, I would not have gained self-confidence,” she adds.

As was the practice in her Muslim community and also a popular social norm, Haleema got married at the age of 18. Marriage brought her to Chennai once again and the cultural dynamics in the city inspired her to get engaged in a job where her presence and skills were looked forward to. But, she could not pursue her dream due to her husband’s ill health and as she had to relocate to Tindivanam.

At Tindivanam, Haleema became an active member of a Self-Help Group. Her active engagement led her to become the coordinator of the SHG very soon. “I saw the differences that SHGs could make in the lives of women and their families as it did for me too! Socio-economic status of the SHG families eventually changed. Witnessing women overcome their financial crisis steadily instilled faith in micro-finance. I wanted to extend more support to my community,” she explains.

Impressed by her work and commitment, Mathura Micro Finance Private Limited decided to recruit Haleema as their Coordinator. Haleema’s work with the SHGs convinced her family about her interest and capacity in handling such a huge responsibility. As it was uncommon for a lady in her community to play this role, she had to face a lot of challenges. “I had to reassure that I knew what I was getting into, and that I will be working only with women,” she says.

Before taking up this job, Haleema only knew a garment shop in Dindivanam. As the circumstances forced her to earn and feed her family, she transformed into an enterprising woman, who managed work



and home with perfect balance, even denying the promotion that came her way. “I gained confidence. I learnt to socialise with all women. I made a lot of friends within bank circles who motivated me to start my own NGO and work with SHG women,” she says.

While many women availed loans through micro-finance scheme, Haleema observed that 96% did not utilise the funds for the reason they had borrowed for. “An isolated focus to reach, with no interest in the actual outcome, disturbed me. Money was always in the hands of men, who most of the time, do not feel responsible for repayment. Every time I went to the community for collection, women made me wait and went about mobilising the amount for that month’s payment, from the same informal sources, that the micro-finance programme intended to eliminate. Women were pushed into a vicious circle

of borrowing and repayment,” she elaborates.

This led Haleema to establish ‘Rojavanam Arakkattalai’ in 2014 to ensure that women who borrowed through SHGs used the funds to create self-employment opportunities. She formed 10 SHGs and her prior experience helped her sail through these stages without any hindrance. However, almost all these groups failed to invest in savings as they only used the group as a source for

borrowing funds. “My plans took a pause and I was almost going to give up. It was then a friend referred me to CSIM. I pursued PG Diploma in Social Initiative and Management. This was the right place for me.

“The course not only allowed me to learn NGO management and engage in a bigger network, but I evolved as a stronger person. I had new ideas and felt motivated. I could place micro-finance within the bigger frame of social development and was able to see the continuum between women’s empowerment and social development,” she says.

Having learnt tailoring at a very young age and her husband being a mechanic in the same field, Haleema decided to start a training centre for underprivileged women and adolescent girls at Rojavanam Arakkattalai’s office, thereby putting the office space to a new use.

As women were speculative about the vocational training programmes that also

promised cash incentives on completion of the programmes, Haleema did not plan her training as a revenue generation model. Instead, she conducted 3 batches free of cost, with 20 women in each batch. The women after training kept requesting her for job opportunities and thus came the launch of a garment unit in August 2016, with six power machines, all pooled in through personal investment. Once again, she was beset by challenges as there were only few orders and sustaining the garment unit was difficult. In the meantime, as she got to interact more often with the community members, she succeeded in forming 50 self-help groups, that are now ready to be engaged. Haleema dreams of introducing interest free micro loans for these women. “This is my mission in life. I know it is difficult, but this can be very effective”.

Undeterred by all obstacles, Haleema continues to plan her next steps with more diligence than before. She has developed a project with six components – education, agriculture, environment, law, substance abuse, women and children—which will help communities evolve as conscious decision makers. “Social and Knowledge Capital are two things that can redefine the course of development in a community. Utilisation of services will improve along with the demand to seek them, ushering in accountability from both ends—service providers and service users,” says Haleema, dreaming of a balance emerging from these dynamics that will promote social development inherently.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

CSIM Annual Convocation



CSIM Chennai organised its 15th Annual Convocation on Saturday, 25th January, 2017 at 11:00 AM at its Chennai Office premises. Shri. G. S. Sundararajan of Shriram Group was the Chief Guest for the event and Smt. Uma Maheswari, Head of the department of Sociology, MOP Vaishnav College for Women was the Special Guest.

Smt. Uma Maheswari gave the Welcome Address and Shri. G.S. Sundararajan delivered the Convocation address and conferred the PG Diplomas and Diplomas upon our 262 Prospective Social Entrepreneurs. He also released CSIM Annual Newsletter 'Prajyoth'.

Shri. P.N. Subramanian, Chairperson - CSIM Governing Council, presented the Annual report and Smt. Latha Suresh, Honorary Director, delivered the Vote of Thanks. CSIM Academic and Governing Council Members, CSIM Faculty and Alumni besides several other college students and well wishers attended the event.



S.No	Course Details	Total Students
1	CSIM Alapakkam Post Graduate Diploma in Social Initiative & Management (PGDSIM)	15
2	Queen Mary's College - PGDSIM	43
3	LIVE Loyola - CSIM - Post Graduate Diploma in Social Enterprise Management (PGDSEM)	6
4	Social Entrepreneurship Outlook Programme (SEOP)	60
5	Stella Maris College - SEOP	23
6	Madras School of Social Work - Social Enterprise Skill Lab	25
7	Sri Kanyaka Parameswari Arts and Science College for Women - Social Connect Programme	55
8	Shri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women - Social Connect Programme	35
Total		262



Convocation Address by Shri G. S. Sundararajan of Shriram Group

CSIM has been doing yeoman service to the cause of Social entrepreneurship and its offshoot, Social Impact. I have been involved in some way or the other with CSIM for over 10 years now and I am extremely proud of what they continue to do in these areas and more particularly in the Indian context.

I am going to talk about what I believe is Social Entrepreneurship, who are some of the role models in this field and of course will conclude by giving my small bit to you all on what is the single most important driver of Social Entrepreneurship.

Being engaged in any business activity fulfilling any common need, even if this is a latent need, is Social Entrepreneurship. This activity need not necessarily be only in Sanitation, Health, Education or Skill development. It can also be in Transportation, Communication or even Entertainment. As long as there is a significant Social impact that can be measured and constantly improved upon, it is Social Entrepreneurship. Obviously, Social Impact comes only when there is a focus and thrust to serve the un-served or under-served in these areas and ensuring that profit is not the only motive. It is quite clear to me that unlike starting any enterprise and trying to make profits and provide returns to stakeholders by hook or by crook, Social enterprises operate with a huge bias on Social benefit and Social Impact as the primary determinants of their success.

Commercial profitability is subservient to Social impact for these enterprises. In short, Social enterprises certainly have the objective of 'Doing well' but with the sole means of Doing Good to the community around them and the Society at large.

I am sure you have seen business people in many industries and communities who insist on starting the day or the new year with this twosome—*Shubh* and *Laabh*. There is no *Laabh* without *Shubh* even for the normal businessmen. It is an expression of their intent to do good and then do well, that is why *Shubh* comes first and before *Laabh*. But as all of us know intention is not as good as the act. Many of



these business men get carried away by the *Laabh* objective and do whatever it takes to achieve that *Laabh*. But this is not the case in Social enterprises as their primary focus is always to Do Good and this differentiates Social Entrepreneurship significantly from other Entrepreneurs. Which is why Social Entrepreneurship commands the natural respect of the Community!

If this is indeed my understanding of Social Entrepreneurship, what are the key characteristics of Social Entrepreneurs? Anyone with a powerful idea who combines his/her vision with real world problem solving creativity becomes a Path-breaker. In such a person there is always Radical thinking and most of the time this is contrarian thinking for the people around. Such kind of people make markets work for them (and not the other way around) and insists on gaining immense strengths from a wide network of Alliances and Partnerships. As these path-breakers focus on doing good to the community they are always full of Humility. There is a book titled: "Good To Great" where the author prescribes various qualities that differentiates the different levels of Leaders. The highest level, according to the author, is Level 5 and the only quality that differentiates the Level 4 leader from a Level 5 Leader is Humility. Successful Social Entrepreneurs, by definition, therefore are all Level 5 Leaders.

All these may look like theory which is perhaps extremely good to read and hear. What about its practical applicability?

Where are these Level 5 Leaders in the field of Social Entrepreneurship who, by their sheer dint of indefatigable commitment and sustained period of work have created a huge positive difference in the lives of people around them and of course to the community at large. I am going to give you 2 standing examples of such tall personalities. One who I have never met but who I have read about and heard of and personally seen the impact he has created, and the other with whom I have worked for the last several years.

The first person is none other than the Founder of CSIM, Shri. P N Devarajan.

Shri. Devarajan demonstrated throughout his life how we can do very well by doing good to others. While Chemical Engineers are generally involved in building processes and designs in the industry they work, Shri. Devarajan, the quint-essential Chemical Engineer believed in complete transformation and permanent positive change—the big difference from the other run-of-the-mill chemical engineers, Shri. Devarajan accomplished these in the cause of our society through sustained social development. He has been a great leader—a Level 5 leader—inspiring people around him to push themselves and in turn their company to greatness. He has lead by example both in his business and in Social work. I have always been amazed at the various dimensions of "Giving" that he has emulated and at the extraordinary life he has led to bridging the huge social divides that exist in our society. Shri. Devarajan gave a real meaning to Dalai Lama's words, "We must each lead a way of life with self-awareness and compassion, to do as much as we can". In fact I am convinced that Marie Banu's book on Shri. Devarajan will be more appropriate to be titled "Path Breaker" instead of "Path Finder".

The other person I wanted to mention here to all of you is Shri. Thiagarajan, the Founder and architect of the Shriram Group. Shri. Thiagarajan is a statistician by qualification and was working with the Insurance Industry in his initial years. Like all great enterprises, Shriram Group had its humble beginnings way back in 1974.

Slowly, but steadily, Shri. Thiagarajan grew Shriram Group's businesses from an insignificant Used Commercial Vehicle Financing outfit to a 90,000 crore financial conglomerate today. All of this was done with a single-minded devotion to serve only the un-derserved and the deprived strata of our society.

The path to Shri. Thiagarajan's success was obviously not devoid of stumbling blocks; be it the lack of resources to grow his used truck finance businesses in the initial years, or the jaundiced eye with which rating agencies like CRISIL used to look at the Shriram business model or even the Reserve Bank of India's subtle negativity about Shriram's businesses in the 90's. None of these deterred Shri. Thiagarajan from driving the group towards the ultimate goal of creating a significant positive difference to the communities we are serving. Time and again he would urge his teams to ask only one question before embarking on a new activity—"Is this good for the community?" He would say that profits will automatically come.

More importantly Shri. Thiagarajan thrived on creating and building partnerships and ensuring that the prosperity of the partners was primary to the growth of the Shriram Group. So much so, Shriram Group catapulted itself to the dominant position it is today and broke the myth that if you focus only on the community you will remain small.

I would like to share this verse by H W Longfellow. "Lives of great men still remind us, we can make our lives sublime, and departing, leave behind us Footprints on the Sands of Time". Lives of Shri. Devarajan and Shri. Thiagarajan are such examples of people whose footprints will guide every other follower to lead an inspired and purposeful life.

I would like to conclude with Upanishads: "We are what our deep inside desire is; as is our desire so is our dream; as is our dream so is our deed; and as is our deed so is our destiny." I am sure that each of you will create your own destiny inspired by the desire to Doing well by Doing Good.



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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Re-introducing Women's Rights



The understanding of women empowerment is, no doubt, continuously evolving. So are the new challenges as women make their presence felt in various domains, where women's presence was not even thought of earlier. As women march ahead, breaking gender stereotypes, there is also a huge body of work going on simultaneously, conscientising and preparing society to welcome these developments. Established in 1975, Stree Mukti Sanghatana (SMS) in Mumbai has been an important part of this journey, in the state of Maharashtra.

Founded by seven friends who were moved by the situation of women oppression in the country, SMS did not gain acceptance easily. "We wanted all women to receive facilities and opportunities as we did. People laughed at this thought," reminisces Ms Jyoti Mhapsekar, one of the Founder Members of SMS. Conceptualised as a voluntary organisation to help vulnerable women, SMS' first task was to sensitise the community and encourage women to seek help from different sources. "The first girls' school in Maharashtra was introduced in 1848. We still have illiterates and a huge number of drop outs in our country. It was bound to be a long journey," says Jyoti, in a reflective tone. Explaining further, she says that rape and dowry were the two big issues then, that affected the wellbeing of women in the society.

SMS established its first counselling centre in 1985. Presently, there are 10 centres spread across seven districts in Maharashtra. Besides counselling services for the affected women, self-reliance was promoted through vocational guidance and employment opportunities, so that they are economically independent.

SMS has organised many large scale awareness campaigns on women's issues across Maharashtra and India, that had a remarkable impact in the society. Their first play "*Ha Prashnacha Chukicha Aahe!*" meaning "The question in itself is wrong!" was produced in 1979 and highlighted problems faced by working women. SMS's awareness campaigns, known as Yatras, were spread across 10-15 days, where around 50 volunteers came together and enacted performances, organised structured conversations with the audience, used presentations to educate them on health issues, violence and harassment, and also displayed their range of publications. These programmes gave an opportunity for the villagers to observe similar messages through different media over a longer period of time, thus influencing a change in their attitude and behaviour.

Eight such Yatras over a period of 15 years gave SMS the foundation to advocate for specific initiatives. One such notable event is the signature campaign in 1989 where 40,000 women participated to request the Government of Maharashtra to introduce a policy to provide creches at the workplace for the benefit of young mothers.

Communicating critical messages was an art and SMS managed to do it in their own style in every campaign. The first of its kind "Cultural Troupe" was formed to present messages on women's issues through different forms of media. This is the only Cultural Troupe in our country that has been functioning for over 35 years, reaching out to every section in the society.

"Access to education is not empowerment. Similarly, lack of access to education does not mean that marginalised cannot be educated or sensitised on social issues. Society, despite its heterogeneity, must be able to comprehend situations and emulate change, and if possible, at each of their levels," Jyoti explains.

Being pioneers in the field, SMS is approached by other autonomous organisations to help design campaigns and also prepare educational material on women's issues. The relevance and effectiveness of materials (songs authored by the women at SMS, articles published and also, their magazine) were evident from the way they were extensively used by other like-minded organisations. One of their plays - "Mulagi Zali Ho", meaning girl is born, written by Jyoti became a huge hit with over 3000 performances. This play was translated into eight languages and was also performed by other organisations in their respective project areas.

The number of women who volunteered to work with SMS increased manifold; all of them wanted to help improve the lives of vulnerable women. While still engaged in a formal employment, these women took time out to strategise interventions and reach out to women from all strata. Domestic Violence complaints were addressed through different strategies like family counselling. Adolescent

sensitisation programmes were also organised to influence gender dynamics among students. SMS also opened day care centres to take care of the children of working mothers, so that their career aspirations were not side lined by new responsibilities for the child. All along, the use of theatre, music and publications on women's issues, not only improved gender perceptions, but also helped Jyoti and her team understand feminism.

"Over the years, our understanding of feminism has improved. We see the same change in our society as well. There are two landmark cases that redefined rape laws in our country - Mathura case and Nirbhaya case. Then and now, the significant difference is the participation of men in the latter. Feminism is no longer confined to what women perceive," says Jyoti, a recipient of the Nari Shakti Puraskar award in 2016.

While theatre and music ensured spreading awareness, there were other

initiatives that intended to consistently update our society on emerging issues in the realm of women's rights. Since 1987, SMS has been publishing a Marathi magazine to achieve this objective. While the literates could read this magazine, SMS made sure that illiterates also had the access to the same information through All India Radio broadcasts and other means.

Engaging men in women empowerment has reached a consensus now; it is also being taken up as a policy directive in some states. SMS was able to demonstrate the impact of men engagement as early as 1980s. "Men from our audiences volunteered to work with us for the benefit of vulnerable

women, supported by SMS. It was never against men," says Jyoti, also informing about the school level sensitisation programmes that led to positive gender attitudes in some districts of Maharashtra. Apart from the strategies discussed above, SMS initiated an exclusive project of the time - Parisar Vikas, in 1998 with the cooperation of Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay (MCGB).

Noting that waste picking is a caste and gender based activity of urban poor, SMS also recognised that most of them came from female headed households and were socially marginalised. Working without any form of protection, lack of bargaining power along with inadequate health

services and access to credit, women were far behind in socio economic parameters. SMS felt that working with these women cannot only help promote the vision of solid waste management, but also contribute to conservation of environment.

Women waste pickers were trained on basic protection and hygiene. After registration and training, women were brought together, either through a self-help group or waste cooperative or micro-credit group, and then capacitated to make profits from their businesses. They were also trained in alternative skills like gardening, bio-methanation and vermin-culture. Assistance in developing business plans was also provided.

Promoting zero waste practices was the next big step to engage these women waste pickers with an institutional set up. Having demonstrated the impact of biogas plants, Parisar Vikas is now trying to focus on composting and bio-gas production at the household level.

Having been with SMS since its inception, Jyoti tries to put women empowerment in perspective. "SMS dreams to see a gender just society. I may not live to see it, but we all must know that areas of focus under women empowerment is a dynamic frame. We have come a long way since 1975 and change in contexts need not be mistaken as being regressive. New forms of patriarchy have emerged and so has the resistance of women. A lot of work is happening. We only have to be positive and supportive throughout. Happy Women's Day!" she signs off.

—Shanmuga Priya.T



What is the role of funders in social impact matters?

“He who pays the piper calls the tune”—An old British saying

The saying is said to emphasise that the person who is paying someone to do something can decide how it should be done.

This above saying is widely used and often in connection with funders and investors – those that provide funds to enable social economy organisations to get on and do things that have social or community benefit.

There is a fine dividing line between those that provide the financial resources and those organisations that carry out the work. How much right have funders in dictating what the work should be, who should do it, how it should be done and how should the benefits be reported back? It is not an easy and straightforward relationship, as often the funders are not always fully aware of the context, do not always understand the difficulties in the delivery of services, and, at times, can get overly involved in how the delivery organisation is managed and how it reports.

At times, those that provide the money can over step the mark. I used to work with overseas aid organisations and UK Government departments that provided much of the funding in the 1980s and they used to dictate to the aid organisations which consultants they should use, what suppliers they should buy from and so on. In a benign way, this may have been meant to be helpful; but at worst it could be seen as interfering and dictatorial.

In the distant past when I worked for a community enterprise support organisation in Scotland we received a grant from the local council. Each year we were expected to report on how the money had been spent. They trusted us to deliver beneficial impacts arising from how the money had been used.

Over the past ten years the situation has changed dramatically. Organisations in receipt of funding are now asked to provide proof of the positive differences that they have made – and, on top of this, the funders themselves are increasingly getting involved in how an organisation reports on its social and community impact. This may be very positive but I feel it is important to understand that there is now a shift in the relationship between funders and the recipients – and that this shift may not be entirely positive.

It comes down to who actually is guiding the social and community change. Should it be funders with often limited staff most of whom have distribution and monitoring roles? Or should it be the delivery organisations who know the social and community needs, the local situations and the way needs can be addressed?



As the UK currently appears to be turning its back on Europe and aping the culture and traditions of the United States, we are placing more emphasis on philanthropy as a substitute for state funding – especially in areas of social and community change. Personally, I feel this is a very worrying trend as economically successful individuals are now resorting to use the profit they have gained from neoliberal business practices in doing ‘good’. Often, they will want to give ‘something back’ through redistribution to those less well-off. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, but the nature of the relationship between the philanthropic funder and the recipient requires more open understanding.

There are a number of factors that can be considered in understanding this relationship:

- funders often want to fund organisations that are familiar to them in what they do, and how they practice
- funders are sometimes remote from the sharp end of delivery. What do they really know of juggling social and business objectives, of having to lay people off, of struggling to make ends meet?
- funders will often talk of working in partnership. But is it really a partnership when one partner wields financial power over another

- when it comes to reporting back on the difference made by the recipients of the funds are we really reporting on the ‘right’ things and the real change that has happened or just on a bunch of targets

So now turning to social impact. In the Social Audit Network we believe that the monitoring and evaluation process should be owned and controlled by the organisation. Without doubt, the recipient of funds should report back to a funder on what has been done with the money and what difference has occurred – but the control of the evaluation should be empowering the organisation and not undermining it by funders pushing for only their agenda to be addressed.

We argue that accounting for social and community change is an integral part of what a social economy organisation should be doing. And perhaps more controversially, we feel that funders are just one of a number of stakeholder groups that have to be reported to... They are often highly influential stakeholders but should not be dominant.

Another important element to reporting on social impact, is that mechanistic and highly structured impact reporting can miss the point.

I read an article from Australia recently called *The politics of social impact: ‘value for money’ versus ‘active citizenship’*. The author, Jenny Onyx, argues that we can get

too bogged down in filling out output, outcome and impact boxes that we miss the point of how a community-based organisation can have a wider impact on local and active citizenship – with all the socialistic, caring, roles and responsibilities attached to that.

So, having said all this – what’s to be done? I met a representative from a large funding organisation in Scotland recently. They stressed listening, partnership, exchange, trust, openness... and I agreed with them. But the relationship is often precarious – but here goes with some suggestions:

- trust is often quoted glibly but it is crucially important as the basis between a funder and a recipient. The thing about trust is that it takes time and shared experience to build up and, unfortunately, can be broken easily and suddenly;
- linked to trust is for both parties to adopt a more enlightened attitude to failure. If funders recognised and accepted failure, more risks can be taken, new things tried, and importantly learning can result from failed attempts;
- if possible, funders should be less prescriptive in how an organisation reports on the difference it is making. Of course, some parameters need to be set down and agreed but the contextual situation should be understood fully by both parties;
- there is also an issue over size and familiarity. Generally, those providing funds want to deal with larger organisations with recognisable ‘business’ systems and procedures. This is often to the exclusion of smaller organisations. This tension around ‘size’ will not go away especially when neoliberal economic systems measure success by how much entities have ‘grown’. There may be a way of getting round this – but I am not sure what it is...

Finally, and to go back to the quote at the beginning – arguably ‘he’ in the saying should learn from social economy organisations how to play the pipes and learn the tune before putting his hand in the funding pocket.

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

A Hand to Grow

The aim for AIDWA is to intervene in all possible stages and promote objectives of democracy, equality and fraternity.

Today's society is replete with a number of challenges that women have to contend with, in all walks of life. These include but are not restricted to issues such as exploitation, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse and honour killings, to name a few. "These issues are being experienced by women not just in homes, but in open spaces, schools, colleges and at the workplace," explains P Suganthi, General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA). "We've observed that perpetrators of these crimes feel that they will not be questioned," she continues, "There is a notion that they can threaten victims with force, and that children would not protest on account of fear of an humiliation."

For several years, the CPI(M)'s women wing, AIDWA, has taken up issues like these on a war-footing, and tackled it efficiently. "We conduct awareness campaigns for the benefit of school and college girls, and do that without even identifying as a political party-affiliated organisation," says Suganthi, "Remember institutions are against any political intervention as such. Hence, it is but imperative that a proper awareness in terms of political platform as a source should be created among them."

But it's not just this that the organisation is restricted to, in its activism against social injustice. "Our agricultural labourers — daily wage earners, minority and marginalized section of women, self-help group women and dalit women — are also some people we work for," says Suganthi, "There is an acute drought at the moment with no harvest in sight. Due to this situation, farmers are forced to undergo an untold amount of suffering." As a consequence of situations like these, farmers are subject to depression and some sort of mental agony. Suganthi says, "They (farmers) are not in a position to settle their bank loans, and relief measures from the Government are neither adequate nor timely. Those who have extended micro finance to them are liberally resorting to the practice of engaging rogues to collect their dues from the rural people."

AIDWA on its part has managed to rehabilitate these affected dalits and stage protests for increasing minimum number of working days from 100 to 200 days. "We have also been actively lobbying to increase daily wages from Rs200 to Rs400, payable by the Government," Suganthi continues. But even as one battle is currently being fought, another one surrounding caste bigotry and caste-based political violence, has also emerged. "This problem is also increasingly happening in Tamil Nadu, from time to time. While, as per law, both the boy and the girl are



entitled to exercise their right to select their life partner, they are not allowed to do so, in reality," says Suganthi, "In the name of tradition and custom as enshrined in the age-old code of Manu, they are mercilessly killed, leave alone ostracized from their clan. Thus, these are the two most crucial problems that are being encountered by the women."

But the journey to social reform hasn't been easy. Facing practical constraints from family and relatives has been a challenge. "There's the matter of late working hours, then there's also the question of raising your children, taking care of our family, and certain other problems that we need to tackle ourselves," says Suganthi, "When we are necessitated to provide shelter and support to the forcibly separated couples, we have to face threats to our very life by the caste fanatics."

Suganthi claims that several of her volunteers in AIDWA have been attacked by anti-social elements. "They are forced to face false cases too. Besides this, the local administrative representatives also face tough challenges while discharging their responsibilities," she says, "Cases like Leelavathi's gruesome murder are also being met with by the members of the women's association."

The issue of domestic violence is another major problem being faced by the women of today. "Addiction to liquor is the basic cause, which has not spared even children and old people," Suganthi says, "We have so far provided counselling to nearly 6000 affected people throughout Tamil Nadu through AIDWA. We have prepared charter of their common demands and presented to the Government for necessary remedial action. Time and again, we have represented to the Government for abolition of TASMACHOPs. Last year we staged closing down of nearly 118 shops through our Women's Wing out of which our Government itself had virtually closed 38 shops."

The NGO's persistence has forced the government to announce closure of a hundred TASMACHOP outlets, so far, with the hope that many more such prohibition-centric measures will be introduced. "It is a real victory on this front. We have also represented to the Government for opening up rehabilitation and counselling centres in the Government hospitals for the sake of the affected families," says Suganthi, who continues, "In addition to this, the dalit women are also put to various kinds of sufferings like sheer exploitation, sexual harassment, caste-based

discrimination and other malpractice, for which also we join hands with their womenfolk and create necessary awareness by way of organizing different propaganda through different means."

The aim for AIDWA is to intervene in all possible stages and promote objectives of democracy, equality and fraternity. Thus, we endeavour our best to intervene in all possible stages and promote our common objectives of democracy, equality and women emancipation from the clutches of exploiters. Our journey towards the ideal state of absolute democracy, equality among the women on a par with men with no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and financial status and above all, their economic freedom in our nation, does continue. "It is doubtless that it requires a virtual revolution or change of order to be brought about for the sake of the oppressed women," says Suganthi, who continues, "Change is only permanent and that is our Marxist philosophy." She signs off: "Everything will change and a safe and secure society will certainly blossom in the days to come for the ultimate benefit of our women."

Nruthya Bodhini – Musings of an Artiste

07 – Arengetrum- Blossoming self

There are several “selves” hidden in every team. Until each of these ‘selves’ don’t totally blossom and connect to the purpose, social entrepreneurial ventures become far-fetched. Most of them take to being a volunteer in a social organization. That seems to be the best proposition because it is usually a short-term commitment – responsibility without the pressure of being accountable and the euphoria of having given something that they wouldn’t otherwise or sometimes, simply a different day from the daily doings. True social entrepreneurship doesn’t happen this way. It calls for integration of the purpose and self and that is the point where the self begins to blossom.

“Sadhana, you are almost ready for Arengetrum, your first solo performance. A couple of months of rigorous practice and you can do it!” Her teacher enthusiastically patted Sadhana’s back. “Oh, will Amma agree to it? Am I truly ready to do it? What if we don’t have the money for it right now?” Sadhana contemplated as she walked home from dance class. When she got home, she told her mother what the teacher had said. Amma listened carefully to Sadhana and calmly said, “I know you will do it one day and I have saved up all my money over the last three years for it. You know, my dear, it’s been my dream to see you perform an entire show by yourself.” Sadhana was overwhelmed and touched. “Mom, how are you always prepared and organized? You never cease to amaze me!” Little did Sadhana realise what an impact her mother’s actions had on her – she would turn out to be just like her mother, an action-based planner that achieved everything she set out to do in the future.

She began training rigorously for her Arengetrum. She had class everyday in the morning and evening for two hours. The teacher choreographed new pieces for her. She was having a hard time learning all of that and keeping up with college – after all, 24 hours never seemed to be enough. Sadhana found alternative ways to stay on top of it all by rehearsing in her mind while riding the bus to college and being ready for class every evening. This also sharpened her memory without her even realizing it. Her mind and body began to synchronize and work together as she rehearsed every moment she got. The regularity increased her

ability to focus and aligned her thoughts and feelings. Having to keep the audience entertained through an entire performance by herself pushed Sadhana to integrate the movements with emotions into seamless form of expression. One morning while she was sipping her mother’s filter coffee, Sadhana chirped, “Amma, I have begun to dream of the dance numbers these days! I have so many new ideas.

Everytime I am alone, the songs keep playing in my head and I am able to express better. I wonder why I never really thought about dance like this so far. I am balance dance and college easily now! It is so fulfilling and enriching.” Her mother smiled knowingly, hugged her and said, “Until dance does not become you, you don’t reach the hearts of the audience. There is no point in just reaching their eyes, its the heart that counts, my dear. I am so happy this is happening to you and I see what happened to music and me happening to you and dance.”

The transition from being a volunteer to a social entrepreneur involves single-handedly taking both accountability and responsibility for the society. The shift allows for one to build a bridge from the micro cosmos to the macro cosmos. It ignites empathy, resilience and bonding that turns a dream into reality. The process of this ignition is the real transformation within. To own, adopt and experience the possibility of possessing an ability to make a difference to others and therefore to oneself is what social entrepreneurship is about.



This ability is experienced the minute one is willing to leave their comfort zone and move to being on their own and connect to the society and its issues deeply.

Three months flew by quickly – costumes, background score, lights, stage, and invites...whew! It felt like

they were planning for a huge Indian wedding. It was also a significant event for the dance school and teacher since Sadhana would be the first student in her class to do her Arengetrum. Everything was meticulously planned and so many tiny hurdles that cropped up were crossed, keeping everything within the tight budget that they had for the event. Finally, it was the D-day. Sadhana’s entire family, relatives and friends supported her with their presence. The auditorium was filled with people known and unknown, invited by her family and friends. Her teacher was gleaming with hope and anticipation and gifted her a new set of dance anklets as her blessing for Sadhana.

“Just meditate, trust all your efforts and leave the results to God. Don’t worry, you will do well,” whispered Amma to a nervous Sadhana. “This is just the beginning my dear and life is large and long ahead. So just do your best!” Rajam Mami, the elderly knowledgeable violinist, said, blessing her. The performance went on for two and half hours with





a break for chief guest speech and felicitation. Sadhana did her best and it was a highly commendable performance. Her connect with the inner dance and the blossoming of the self to invoke the art was highly visible through the evening. The audience stayed through the performance and cheered with applause and appreciation.

The taste of appreciation and stage enveloped and overwhelmed Sadhana. Her parents swelled up with pride and love for their little girl. Sadhana had become a known dancer to all her relatives, friends and other artists. There was a new identity that had come into her life. This held higher significance than many other identities that had existed so far. There was a clear sense of transition from being a dancer to an artist. The outer song had connected itself to the inner song sowing a seed of purpose in Sadhana's life. All she could tell herself before falling asleep that night was "I know what I want to do and what I am born for now, thank you God." Her mother had seen the connect that was happening to Sadhana on. Like every parent who is waits for the child to find their sense of purpose and life ahead, Amma had also wanted to see the artist blossom

in her daughter one day. That night, Amma and Appa slept with a deep sense of completion and fulfilment. The journey had begun.

There is a time when all of us experience oneness with the universe that throws open the sense of purpose in life. More so is the life of a social entrepreneur. Working alone to make a difference to oneself and others brings a deep connect when both the micro and macro cosmos merge. Being able to identify it, recognise it and capture it is the most important thing to do. Along with everything else comes the acceleration and brakes too. Being a social agent has two dimensions; the contribution and the joy of taking the path less traveled. Understanding both and what it leaves behind in the social entrepreneur is a very important revelation. Life has its own ways of unfolding such nuances at the most appropriate time. Those who can connect to it will know what is happening and recognise the value of the journey more than the lure of popularity that tags along.

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

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath

Rigidity



When an accident deprived the village headman of the use of his legs, he took to walking on crutches. He gradually developed the ability so well that he could dance and execute pirouettes. He also trained his children in the use of crutches. By the fourth generation, no one in the village could walk without crutches. It had become a way of life. One day a young man demanded to know why everyone had to walk on crutches since God had provided people with legs to walk on. The amused village elders, in order to teach him a lesson, asked him for a demonstration.

On a bright Sunday morning, in front of the whole village gathering, the young man stood upright and dropped his crutches, took a bold step forward and fell flat on his face. With that, everyone made fun of him for the attempt he had made and confirmed their belief that it was quite impossible to walk without the help of crutches.

Explicit Learning

- A. To change what has been happening for generations, one needs a lot of support and not mockery.
- B. To follow what is existing is easy even if it is wrong.
- C. We resist any change the minute it calls for some effort on our part.

Introspective Learning

- A. Why do I resist change?
- B. What is the nature of 'Rigidity'?
- C. How do I deal with my rigidity?

“I believe that India will be free of Maoism - in the present form.”

Shri K. Vijay Kumar IPS shares with Marie Banu the possibility of India to be a naxal-free nation.

Shri. K. Vijay Kumar is a former officer in the Indian Police Service (IPS) and was the Chief of the Special Task Force that was behind the killing of the notorious bandit Veerappan during Operation Cocoon of 2004.

Shri. Vijay Kumar joined the Indian Police Service on 10 November 1975. He served as Assistant Superintendent in Pattukkottai, Trichy and Sembiam. As Superintendent of Police, he served in Dharmapuri from 1982 to 1983 and Salem from 1983 to 1985. He assisted Mr. Walter Devaram IPS during this tenure. He served from 1985 to 1990 in the Elite Special Protection Group (SPG) with former Prime Minister Shri. Rajiv Gandhi. In 1990, he was posted as the SP of Dindigul district followed by Vellore district in 1991. He dealt with the Bus conductors and drivers' strike with a firm hand.

In 1991, he went on to form the Special Security Group (SSG) to provide security to Former Chief Minister Jayalalitha. In 1997, he was posted as the first Inspector General of Police for the South Zone after having handled the caste clashes in the southern districts. He served from 1998 to 2000 as the Inspector General, Border Security Force (BSF) Srinagar during the peak of militancy. He also served as IG (Operations), BSF before being recalled to the state to head the operations to hunt the forest brigand Veerappan.

In December 2001, he was appointed Commissioner of Police, Chennai. The highlight of his career came when he headed the task force operation, Operation Cocoon that killed the forest brigand Veerappan in October 2004.

In 2008, Shri. Vijay Kumar was chosen to head the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad. He served as the Director General of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) from 2010 to 2012.

In December 2012, the Union Government appointed Shri. Vijay Kumar as Senior Security Adviser in the Home Ministry where he advises on security and development in the Naxal-affected States. He has been entrusted with the job of advising in deployment of the Central armed police forces (CAPFs) in the LWE-affected areas, besides overseeing coordination among the CAPFs and State police forces (SPFs) for counter-insurgency operations.

In an exclusive interview, Shri Vijay Kumar IPS shares with Marie Banu the possibility of India to be a naxal-free nation.



Your recent book ‘Chasing the Brigand’. How was it to relive the moments of capturing Veerappan?

It's a unique feeling for the mind and body. I just have to close my eyes and goose pimples will erupt. It's vivid. I don't hype when I say I can visualise the climactic part- each of my boy's perch, what all was going on. All the activities seemed dissected into mini- actions - for instance an old couple who suddenly were heading towards us on mobike, at may be 40 km speed, but it seemed an eternity, because they were cutting into our last 10 minutes. Those moments, as I recollect now remain a strange mix of flash back and fast forward. I've in the last chapter tried somewhat to capture that mood.

You have mentioned that the proceeds of the book will be donated to charity. Which of the present social issues are you most passionate about?

I've no idea how much money this book would rake in, but that decision not to retain it was made soon after ops Cocoon. I'm looking at education & skill - development in parts of his and STF turf.

What is your impression about NGOs in India?

Like in most walks of life, amongst NGOs too, there are the good, the bad and the ugly ones - but mostly good. Luckily, I've done business with the last mentioned types. In Maoist - affected areas if they fill in governance - void in even small ways, I

say, we should embrace than shun them. A bad NGO is an oxymoron and an occasional accident. But a bad apple has enormous negative capability to erase all the positives of the rest. It's like a rogue cop who erases the noble toil of his peers in one wrong move.

You present role in providing security and development in the Naxal-affected States. Do you think that it is possible for India to be a naxal-free nation?

I'd prefer to use the word 'maoist', than 'Naxal'.

I can't fix a deadline but things are getting better with a 4-prong strategy of 'security - development- rights & better information'. The thumbnail is in 2016, Maoist violence was 40% less than previous year's. I believe India will be free of Maoism - in the present form. But the movement may morph. There are too many pockets of angst that can be tapped. My take is: their philosophy of armed rebellion does not gel with a democracy - even an imperfect one-is a better fit for a heterogeneous society such as ours (than disruptive Maoism). Maoists' narrative stands on the conflation of indigence, exploitation and injustice down the ages. I feel this entitles a very compassionate and positive discrimination but certainly not weaponising the deprived. Minus his gun, a Maoist may be ok.

Your thoughts about honor killing and how it can be resolved?

Honor killing is abominable practice, doesn't fit into a modern world. Social engineering, which is usually done by education (social awareness) or enforcement (by enacting a law) is a must. Sati, child marriage, dowry were once 'honourable'. Not anymore. So, to stop honour killings, we need to educate the concerned and also vigorously enforce the laws.

Your advice for IPS aspirants?

It's not an easy job. If you like outdoor work, if you like to lead men 24x7 in combat (of a different sort), if you like getting paid for being fit and looking smart (in uniform) and want to try out 'fair-weather captaincy', please join the (IPS) club. But over and above all these, one has to be a bit cerebral. Because, each year 5 to 7 lakh people are jostling for a 100 IPS slots. IPS is one of the finest jobs ever.