

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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WILL TO GROW

About Villgro, a lead incubator for social enterprises



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Editor : Marie Banu
Phone : 044-42805365



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From the Editor

Dear Friend,

Entrepreneurs are the heroes of this era. They play a lead role and work towards creating economic progress. They are creative and constantly look for new opportunities to venture.

Social Entrepreneurs, often referred to as public entrepreneurs, civic entrepreneurs, or social innovators retain the positive virtues of an Entrepreneur. They believe that the societies need can only be fulfilled through self-regulating mechanisms, otherwise called markets. They work towards achieving social goals that benefit poor and marginalized people around the world and do not wish to earn high profits. In fact, they go beyond the ideal of Corporate Social Responsibility. They operate at the micro-economic level, providing basic necessities to poor people at community level.

Social entrepreneurship is an emerging field that offers opportunity to young professionals to create social and economic value on a sustained basis. Many development organizations in our country have chosen to move towards social entrepreneurship. In fact, some have moved from a not-for-profit model to for-profit model wherein people pay for the products or services they receive. This is viewed as an alternative source of funding to government grants, foreign Funding, donations, etc.

The time is certainly ripe for entrepreneurial approaches to solve social issues. Social entrepreneurs are therefore needed to develop new models.

CSIM has been a pioneer in Social entrepreneurship training in India. We hope the articles featured in Conversations Today inspire you to become a social entrepreneur.

Come, be the change!

—Marie Banu

Editorial

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

Having the courage to laugh

Laughter is another side of courage. It lightens your spirit when things don't go your way.



Illustrator : Xinnie Ng

Butet Manurung awoke to find her tent surrounded by water. Her precious pots and pans were floating away. And the villagers – whom she had just befriended – stood there laughing at her.

Overnight, a torrential downpour had caused the river banks to overflow. And as she scrambled to rescue her things, a cloud of bees descended on her, causing her to jump into the river. Her sarong floated up. She looked like a giant jellyfish.

Like the villagers, Butet and her team are full of laughter as they share about the hardships they encounter in setting up Sokola Rimba, or the Jungle School, an education system that has impacted more than 10,000 indigenous children in remote parts of Indonesia.

The gales of laughter continue unabated as they recall how one teacher was tricked into cutting down a poisonous sapling which caused his skin to break out in hives.

I had travelled to Jakarta to interview Butet and her team but I didn't know what was so funny about getting run out by village chiefs, camping in mud, eaten by leeches, or being stricken by jungle fevers.

I had sought out Sokola Rimba because Butet's life of purpose had inspired countless Indonesians.

For her efforts, Butet, also known as Saur Marlina Manurung, has won the Magsaysay award (the Asian equivalent of the Nobel prize).

Her daily notes recounting her initial challenges have been published as The Jungle School and adapted into a docudrama titled Sokola Rimba.

Trained as an anthropologist, Butet set out in 1999 to teach literacy classes among the hunter-gathering Orang Rimba of Bukit Dua Belas in Jambi.

The Orang Rimba lived in tight-knit communities, deriving everything they needed from the jungle that was increasingly ravaged by poachers and exploitative planters. Despite her quixotic efforts to

educate them, the Rimba elders didn't trust her. They told her to leave. She achieved no tangible results for several years.

But Butet found that she could play with the children. They would laugh and joke around.

Eventually it was the children who insisted that she teach them how to read and count. She built trust and acceptance with the community by learning to laugh and relax with the Rimba children.

"You have to learn about yourself and allow yourself to learn from your students," she wrote in her journal.

The teacher began learning from her best students. The quickest learners were turned into trainee teachers. Butet then developed a reading, writing and counting syllabus based on the Orang Rimba's everyday life.

After learning to read within two weeks using a phonetic system, the children began learning how to calculate prices for buying and selling goods.

The kids negotiated better prices for their jungle fare. Thanks to their ability to read, the children were able to advise their village elders to reject unfair land deals proffered to them by loggers and officials.

The ultimate aim of the education system is to teach people to advocate for themselves: to know their rights, solve health problems and stop illegal logging.

"These skills give them more power in making informed decisions affecting their futures," Butet says.

Buoyed by these breakthroughs, Butet and four others founded the NGO Sokola in 2003 to extend the programme to other communities.

On a skeletal budget, her team now mobilises volunteers to reach interior communities as far away as Halmahera, Flores and Papua New Guinea.

This means finding people willing to initiate the programme on a shoestring.

Despite the physical challenges, Butet doesn't look primarily for courage or idealism in potential team members.

"We look for people with a sense of humour," Butet says over lunch, as I sit with her team in her home-office on the outskirts of Jakarta.

As we eat fried fish and curry prepared by Butet's mother, I ask them: "What's your biggest challenge?"

"Malaria!" they chorus, beaming at me.

"How many times have you contracted malaria?" I ask Butet.

"Once," she says, smiling.

"Only once?" I ask. "In your book, I think you got malaria at least three times."

"Ooooh, I thought you asked me how many types of malaria I've contracted," she says. "I've gotten only one type of malaria. But I've gotten malaria many times."

"How many times?" I ask. Five times? Ten times?

"Dozens of times. Fifty times? I've lost count!" She laughs.

The whole table explodes with merriment.

What was so funny?

But suddenly it struck me: laughter is another side of courage.

When you choose to keep on teaching even when you are shivering and your bones are screaming from malarial fever, that's courage.

When you are rejected by others, or when the children play dangerous pranks on you, you learn to laugh at yourself and to smile with them.

That's why Butet's team look for people with a sense of levity. Laughter lightens your spirit when things don't go your way.

—A story by Our Better World –
the digital storytelling initiative of
the Singapore International
Foundation
(www.ourbetterworld.org)

Women force to reckon with



Empowerment of women in a multicultural setting is a long journey. It is a multi-layered process that strives to reconstruct the idea of gender from the perspective of equality and equity. “It is a big reform when a woman exercises autonomy to decide on her household expenditure. Irrespective of her being an earning member, the responsibility to manage household expenditure seldom comes with decision making power. The idea of empowerment is to bring change at that level by leveraging small opportunities and build the confidence in women to be able decision makers,” explains R Palaniammal, Founder of Jos NGO in Dharmapuri district.

Hailing from Kadunayakanalli village in Dharmapuri district, Palaniammal discontinued her studies after class 9 and was married off early by the age of 16. “I live amongst women who have accepted the decisions taken by their families. Myrada completely transformed my vision for women in my village,” she adds. After marriage, Palaniammal got an opportunity to get trained in Myrada. As her spouse also worked in the development sector, her exposure further helped in contextualising the idea of empowerment in her village.

Women in the villages are mostly confined to their households. “I realised that it was important to empower them as they were capable of understanding and prioritising the needs of their children and family,” says Palaniammal who organised many events, training programmes and social activities in her village along with Myrada’s support.

Palaniammal received training in sustainable agriculture, micro finance, formation and management of women’s groups and economic empowerment of women, among others. While she continued



to organise activities like toilet construction in local schools, awareness building on child marriage and importance of education, she found herself ‘empowered and capable’. “I felt socially responsible as I had the functional knowledge to guide local women and children on educational loans and its procedures and about managing decision making within households. I liked to see how consciously women revisited their decisions and understood priorities in a household,” she smiles.

Eventually, Palaniammal formed women’s groups and mentored them. Right from recognising priorities and seeking loans, she capacitated the women’s groups and also trained them in managing their accounts. Her groups became a medium to organise awareness programmes, plantation drives and communicate critical

information on services that the villagers could avail. Women began to look forward to her leadership and grew very comfortable with her presence in the field. In 2006, she established her own NGO to strengthen the women’s groups and replicate the model in the neighbouring villages.

“It was a simple beginning with limited resources. I wanted to see the groups growing together, and in the process, influence their families. It has been 10 years now. The groups function independently and share their experiences with each other. They work together to prevent child

marriages, female infanticide and domestic violence. Education is a priority in every household now. People from the villages avail education loans now. Environmental sustainability has become a universal concern here. Kitchen gardens are becoming popular and plantation drives are organised frequently. Women have become a positive force, influencing decisions within and outside their homes. This is a new beginning in my village,” says a content Palaniammal.

Palaniammal’s association with the ‘Pungal Nilaithu Needitha Kutamaipu’, a federation of NGOs from seven districts introduced her to the SEOP programme at CSIM. While she intended to learn project management in detail,

Palaniammal feels that the course gave her more than what she had expected. “I recognised simple errors in the way I planned my activities and the difference they could have possibly had on the impact created,” she admits. Interaction with different stake holders, according to her, gave her big lessons. “I was in the midst of people who respected each other’s vision and looked forward to learning from them. I saw men talking about women empowerment,” shares Palaniammal who feels determined to see her women’s groups evolve as a social force in the village, shaping the course of growth and development as equal participants.

**At CSIM,
I was in the midst
of people who
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—Shanmuga Priya.T

Zoho, Now Built From Rural India

At a day-long tete-a-tete during the launch of Zoho Desk at Tenkasi, its co-founder Sridhar Vembu uncovers the entrepreneur, the strategist, and the Buddhist in him.



As soon as I set foot into Tenkasi, while acres of green, carpeted lands and chill winds jolt me for a brief, I soon begin enquiring with the locals of the whereabouts of Mathalamparai, where one of Zoho Corp's Southern offices is situated. And, in that typical Malayalam-blended Tamil, almost every localite unanimously responds with reports of a huge office, global company, numerous employees and such. Naturally, having been raised in a metro all my life, I imagine a Cognizant-like setup, with a large group of formally dressed employees diligently peering into their systems, only to see it go up in smoke that afternoon.

Zoho, at Tenkasi, could easily be misplaced by a rookie. Set in the middle of sprawling acres of farm lands, almost at an intersection where three lanes converge, lies the 15 acre box-shaped building, camouflaged amidst still more greenery. Inside, employees, unlike in a typical corporate setup, move around at ease in Veshti (dhoti) and Jibba (a long shirt), preparing for the launch, that evening, of Zoho's new product, Zoho Desk. Further behind emerge churning sounds of mortar and wheeling cranes, and I'm told the office is being expanded to thrice its current size to accommodate more employees. "Many of the 150 employees here are either from Zoho University or from nearby towns. In an age where search of wealth and standard of living is driving people away from their home, thus making them lonely, we try to build a culture

where employees feel at home at their workplace," opines Sridhar Vembu, its co-founder.

That Vembu prioritises his employees and company's culture ahead of profitability is no trade secret, as is the fact that Zoho is one of the few bootstrapped and successful companies serving global customers from India. But, why Tenkasi? I ask him and in his inimitable style he recalls a famous scene out of the 1989 American movie, Field of Dreams where the Shoeless Shoe Jackson (played by Ray Liotta), jogs across bursting fields and asks Ray Kinsella (played by Kevin Costner): Is this heaven? And says Kinsella, No it's Iowa!

Wits apart, over the course of our conversation, surface apparent reasons for his move. Foremost being, right from its early days, Vembu has had a firm footing in India, having been raised and spent plenty a summers in Umayalpuram, a village in Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu), where he was born and raised. Furthermore, a strong belief he harboured and still does, is the alienation modern society creates, especially on people who move away from their home to work in far off regions. "When these people move to a big city, they are lost. It's ironic how we want to achieve great things at the cost of losing ourselves," he remarks and adds, "As much as we like to think we're creating focussed, global citizens, that's not what most people are. Many want to just be attached to a place they can call home."

The vision is to make Zoho a one stop destination for all OS needs, while touching a user base of 1 billion (from the current 20 million) in over a decade.

A second, more atypical reason for Zoho to build in rural India was to turnaround what the GEs and Citrix Systems of the world were doing; moving from suburbs to downtown, in turn drawing local talent away and making cities unaffordable. "There's a notion that in cosmopolitan areas, pool of potential workers with relevant skillsets is sufficiently large. They also want execs to have access to high quality restaurants and hotels," he points out. While, in this stride, the move to Tenkasi was more recent, another classic move Zoho made to disprove this theory was to setup Zoho University (earlier known as AdventNet University) in 2005. The University recruits high-school graduates from Tier II and Tier III cities and towns, and provides them with a

24-month contextual training, later engaging them in interesting job roles. As he candidly admitted in a 2012 interview with The Smart CEO, "A vast majority of students, especially those who attend second-rung colleges, learn very little; it is a waste of time and a waste of parents' money. We felt we could turn the college education model on its head."

And he did. Currently, with centres in Tenkasi and Chennai, the University has trained close to 350 students, and nearly 15 per cent of the company's staff comprises graduates from here.

Looking Within, For Development

Turning to rural India for talent not only earned Zoho employees with corresponding skill sets, but also became one of the primary reasons for Zoho Corp to build a profitable business with productivity and frugality. Take for example the pivot Vembu and his team made to tackle the dotcom recession which hit global markets in the 2000s. With over 600 engineers in India (a portion of them from Zoho University) and eight sales and marketing employees in California, Vembu hustled his teams to focus on R&D and new product development, to launch a range of new, unique yet cost-effective products; including Zoho, ManageEngine and WebNMS. While on one hand, the products replaced the suite of Microsoft Office products, productivity and collaboration applications on the cloud, on the other, they were priced at one fourth the cost their competitors' products.

For instance, at that time, Salesforce had priced its enterprise CRM product at US \$125 per month per user, while Zoho offered its CRM at US \$25 per month per user. "What we did different was to adopt an engineering-centric approach, with marketing spends being fairly low, while at Salesforce, the whole model was marketing and sales-driven," he explained, during an earlier interview with The Smart CEO.

The Art of Product Development

Of course, today, the tables are turning. Zoho has now resorted to mass advertising and as Vembu adds, increased spends on marketing, partly because now he believes he can confidently tell the world; we know how to develop a good product.

While Zoho.com, WebNMS and ManageEngine remain the key business divisions at Zoho, serving a lakh customers across 122 countries, Vembu's

sights on the product development front are set higher; he wants Zoho to become the one-stop platform for all software needs (for businesses); with Zoho, on one hand, developing a suite of products to implant into a client's business, and on the other, enabling clients to develop their own apps, as in the case of Zoho Creator, which helps Zoho partners, ISVs, IT services companies, domain experts and developers build custom applications for their business. "We're currently fulfilling 80 per cent of our clients' OS (operating system) needs. The goal is to cover the remaining 20 per cent," he reveals.

The game plan to achieve this is quite precise; one, creating a combination of raw talent equipped with the right skills, and two, specialisation into specific verticals (on top of the horizontal platform), such as Zoho for manufacturing, healthcare and analytics. "We want to touch a billion users as well,

which may take a little over a decade," he estimates.

The Unseen Path to Profitability

Over the course of the day, a striking feature about Vembu was the ease with which he indulged in chatty conversations with the students at the University, as much as with the employees seated within. The response to this reveals the Buddhist side of the tech evangelist. "While leadership and decision-making is crucial to an organisation, I don't see why we should lose the human connection," he opines. A self-confessed Modi fan, he explains how, though Modi holds a powerful title as a Prime Minister, he doesn't come across as an unapproachable leader. "Why take yourself so seriously and throw your weight around all the time?" he asks.

An approach as this might also be why Vembu makes the 'art of letting go' seem like a walk across the park. "Trying to micromanage people is not fun. If I start keeping track of what each and every employee is doing, why they are slacking and such, I won't have time to do anything interesting. It's suffering. Once you realise that, you let go. That's Buddhism," he puts, candidly.

One can say, his management style and the value systems he has brought into the business is, to an extent influenced by a book titled "The Road to Serfdom" written by Austrian British Economist and Philosopher, Friedrich von Hayek. The book, said to be written between 1940 and

1943, elaborates on the danger of developing centralised goals and 'the will of a small minority being imposed on the people', which may result in loss of individual freedom and create an undemocratic society. Although written in the context of the Government intervention in markets, Vembu draws a parallel to Hayek's ideology in creating a decentralised structure within his own organisation. "This book has deeply influenced how I build my company. I try not to take a decision where I don't need to. It gives the employees the personal space to prosper with liberty and dignity," he states.

Keeping Context at the Core

He views his company as a University, where the core idea is to learn continually and contextually. Given the pace of change the technology and software industry is witnessing today, it is an unwritten rule that in order for companies such as Zoho to stay ahead of the curve, they need to constantly ask; what is new? "Virtual reality, for example, is the in-thing today. Now, everybody is just trying to play with the tool, testing it out. But in the process, if we find something interesting, we'll set up a team and before you know it, it becomes a mainstream product," he explains.

As we come to the end of our discussion, I ask Vembu a last question; how do you retain your

employees? And pat comes a response laced with a pinch of satire, "There's a quote I use a lot; when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a measure. Meaning, if you associate something like employee happiness to a scale of one to 10, and set yearly targets for happiness, the whole purpose of the exercise is lost."

As we wrap up the interview, there come calls from the nearby vendor, inviting us for a mound of fresh coconut water, known to be a speciality at Tenkasi.

Product Strategy

That patience and endurance is key to the success of any product is evident from the five-year timeline that the Zoho team at Tenkasi allowed itself, before launching Zoho Desk this November. "Even though the product was ready a year ago, we spent 12 months testing it to be absolutely sure that it works," said Sridhar Vembu, its co-founder. Zoho Desk is a context-aware helpdesk software which helps companies deliver the right solutions to customers, at the right time. Thus far, it has handled 50 million tickets for 20 million customers, and happens to be the sixth product launched this year, apart from Zoho Notebook, AppCreator, SalesInbox, Marketplace and Developer.

—Madhumita Prabhakar

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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

Contact Persons:

Ms. Marie Banu,
Director, Chennai
@ 9884700029

Mr. Ramesh Balasundaram
Director, Bangalore
@ 9845211311

Mr. K L Srivastava,
Director, Hyderabad
@ 9912656112

Dr. Madhuri. R,
Head, Coimbatore,
@ 9840222559

Mr. Sandeep Mehto,
Head – Hosangabad,
@ 96696 77054

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

For further information, please call: Ms. Latha Suresh, Director, SAN, India @ 92822 05123. www.san-india.org

WILL TO GROW



On the healthcare front, a majority of our population don't have access to basic healthcare or health cover, with out-of-pocket expenses pushing more people deeper into poverty

An emerging economy like that of India's has had a history of "pain points" to deal with. With a teeming population, less-than-desirable access to basic requirements like healthcare and education, these pain points have, over time, become more pronounced. To help accelerate development in some of these sectors, and thereby contribute to poverty alleviation, one of India's first social enterprise incubators, Villgro, was established in 2001. "While India has been known as a 'traditionally agrarian economy', agriculture in this country suffers from a painful lack of innovation, especially at small farms, which constitute a majority of our farming

establishments," says Paul Basil, Founder and CEO, Villgro, taking us through how far his organization has come. He continues: "On the healthcare front, a majority of our population don't have access to basic healthcare or health cover, with out-of-pocket expenses pushing more people deeper into poverty. As far as education is concerned, there are concerns around low enrolments, poor quality of teaching, lack of assessment tools and high dropout rates." The fact that these pain points continue to exist today, remains the reason why 16 years into its inception, Villgro continues to focus on four focus areas: agriculture, education, and healthcare.

"At Villgro, our focus is on solving what we believe are the most pressing challenges for the country," says Paul, "Solving these problems will go a long way in poverty alleviation." And that is perhaps why the incubator has been at the forefront of supporting agricultural innovations that help farmers boost their yield and also innovate newer avenues as income-generators. In fact, even as Tamil Nadu currently reels under unprecedented drought, Villgro has focused on innovations on the irrigation front, to help the State's farmers cope. "One of the subsets within agriculture that we focus on is innovative irrigation solutions that could potentially help farmers in drought-hit areas," says Paul.

As an incubator, Villgro says it measures success by the number of social enterprises it has helped attain success. "Our mandate is poverty alleviation and the impact we help our portfolio companies create, is what we get in return," Paul explains, "The more successful these companies get, the more

confidence donors will have on social entrepreneurship as a model. "As a result of this, Villgro has dedicated its energies towards incubating early-stage for-profit businesses, with a thrust in one of its four focus areas. The process of bringing a start-up under Villgro's wing is extensive and done with the greatest diligence and care. "We conduct a detailed diligence on any enterprise we incubate," he says, "This includes detailed interviews with the founding team and their colleagues or associates, extensive technical investigation into the accuracy and effectiveness of a product, site visits to understand the workings of a product or solution up close and to interact with the customer or beneficiary segment." But it doesn't stop just there. Villgro also conducts extensive consultations with sector specialists and business experts, to test the viability of the model. All of this constitutes a process that could take a month, or more. "This is a highly critical step that we don't compromise on," Paul adds.



On the healthcare front, Villgro's incubate companies have engineered breakthrough innovations. Villgro says these innovations could not only bring down healthcare costs, but also improve access to "life-saving medical interventions". Paul says these innovations include dealing with conditions like anaemia, hypothermia and needless blindness. "This, even as our agriculture incubated companies are helping small farmers with newer, more efficient market linkages, and innovations in the areas of precision farming, and mechanization," says Paul. Not to be left out, Villgro's education incubated companies have their priorities clear in that teacher training, school assessments, K-12 education content and delivery, and vocational training continue to be focus areas, here. And the reason Villgro targets early-stage companies? "We want to help them perfect their business model, find markets and scale their business," answers Paul.

Interestingly, it's not just the focus areas of healthcare, education, agriculture and energy that Villgro participates in. From time to time, on a case-to-case basis, the incubator steps outside the comfort zone of its core sectors, delving into non-core sectors too. "We step outside of our core sectors when we see an exceptionally high degree of innovation that can have massive impact on low-income communities," says Paul, explaining the criteria that governs this crucial call. "We have supported an enterprise helping low-income Indians bridge the digital divide through speech-recognition

solutions, a fin-tech enterprise enabling access to capital, a clean cook-stove company creating solutions for highway kitchens, among others." In all cases, Villgro's assessment of these models focused on the "potential for impact" that these respective businesses came with. "In all cases, the impact was massive, as was the business case," says Paul.

Moving forward, Villgro wants to keep fortifying its core sectors, so as to add more value to its portfolio companies. It hopes to do this, even as it charts out an ambitious expansion plan on the geography front. "We are the lead incubator on

Interestingly, it's not just the focus areas of healthcare, education, agriculture and energy that Villgro participates in.

an ambitious initiative that aims to unearth social enterprises exclusively from the low-income states of India. To do so, we are training four existing incubators in social enterprise incubation best practices," says Paul, "Villgro Kenya is establishing itself as a health incubator of choice for social

enterprises in the region. We are also expanding into Vietnam and The Philippines."

So, while healthcare, education, agriculture, financial inclusion and sanitation will continue to pose challenges in India, Villgro's innovators are at work — finding solutions to challenges in these sectors. "Entrepreneurs who can build a well-rounded team and can demonstrate a viable business model will eventually attract funding from impact investors and be able to create impact at scale," says Paul as he signs off.



Assessing social enterprise and their impacts? Are we looking at the right stuff?

With the rapid expansion of what is now really an 'industry' surrounding the measurement and assessment of social impact, it may be beneficial to reflect on whether or not we are looking to assess the 'right' things. Are social enterprises, in particular, focussing their energy on the things that matter?

I would like to look at two things. The first is the seemingly dogged emphasis on 'impact' and not always paying sufficient attention to the performance of an organisation. Linked to this is a lack of attention to an organisation's approach, its values and its way of doing things that make it different from other organisations – particularly privately owned businesses.

The second is much wider and I shall argue that the accepted and traditional triple bottom line impacts of social, environmental and economic should be questioned. Arguably, social enterprises should be aiming to impact on people, the environment and society or 'culture'.

So taking the first... and to do this I want to look at the history of social accounting and audit. Back in the 1990s social and community enterprises, along with voluntary organisations tried reporting regularly and in a systematic way on their overall performance against their objectives. In the mid-2000s, there was a pendulum swing away from performance and much more stress given to the impact an organisation has on its stakeholders. This was largely linked to the meteoric rise in Social Return on Investment (SROI) and, I believe, driven by investors and funders wanting to get a bigger bang for their buck. Reporting by social enterprises and similar third sector organisations focussed almost entirely on the outcomes for stakeholders and not nearly so much on how well the organisation performed given the context in which it was working, or on what type of organisation it was trying to be – its approach, its shared values and so on.

There are recent signs that this pendulum swing is beginning to

Social Accounting and Audit is not rocket science. It is a holistic framework that enables an organisation to report on all aspects of its performance and impact, internally and externally.

move back and people are now also wanting to know if the organisation is performing well – not least of all the organisation itself. There is also a need to know if it is a 'good' organisation to be seen to be investing in, to be working for and to be proud to support.

With Social Accounting and Audit (SAA) an organisation is expected to report not only on its outcomes and impacts on stakeholders, but also on its performance against its overall purpose and objectives. Again, context is important as often organisations are operating under difficult circumstances and providing goods and services in often the most challenging of situations.

In addition, and using the SAA framework, organisations are obliged to report on their internal processes and values. This is mainly through the use of a simple checklist called the Key Aspects Checklist which prompts the organisation to consider its own approach to 6 aspects common to all organisations:

- how the people who work for an organisation are treated;
- how the organisation is governed and how accountable it is;
- how surplus is used and whether or not there is an asset lock;
- its financial sustainability;
- how it impacts on the environment; and finally
- how it contributes to the local economy if it is community based.

Turning to the second thing I want to look at... the impacts.



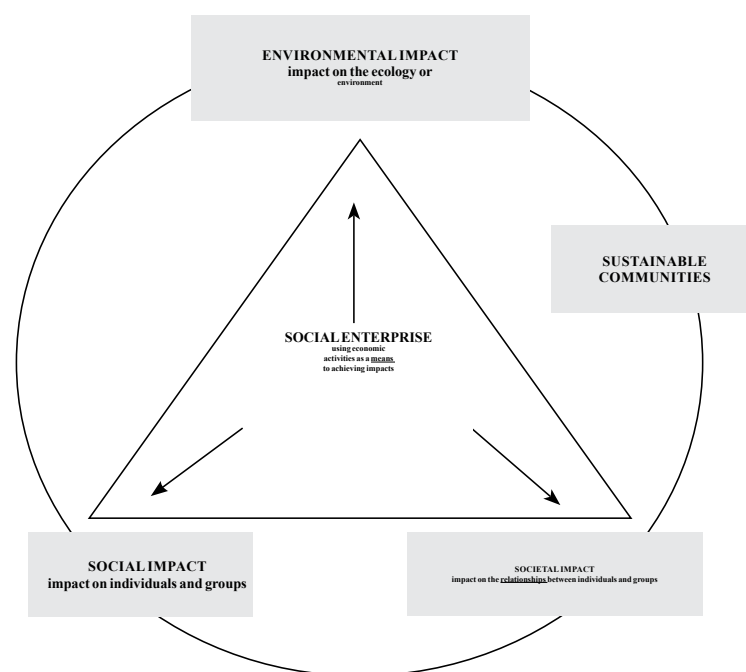
Traditionally, it has been widely regarded that social enterprises have a 'triple bottom line' of social, environmental and economic impacts.

I am increasingly of the opinion that social enterprise should be using economic activities as a means to an end – the end being working towards social, environmental and societal impacts.

Rather than perceiving the economy as an 'impact', the use of economic activities is what a social enterprise does – a means. But this is different from the final ends, which are impacts on individual and groups (social), impacts on the planet (environment) and impacts on the relationship between people and groups (society). Thus, economic activities are a means to an end and not an end in themselves.

A social enterprise has to ensure that it impacts on people and their livelihoods in a positive way ensuring prosperity and well-being. I am defining prosperity here, as being more than money and distinct from wealth for its own sake.

All organisations and people have an impact on the environment. At the very least, a social enterprise can monitor that it does not have an adverse or negative affect on the environment.



In this model society is defined as the relationships between people and groups. It includes the culture of a society – the way we do things, the rules and behaviours and the expectations of how things should be. All social enterprises operate in a societal context and social enterprises in particular should monitor and at least account for their impact on the wider society in which they operate – their contribution to a culture that promotes fairness, equality and the 'common good'.

Social Accounting and Audit is not rocket science. It is a holistic framework that enables an organisation to report on all aspects of its performance and impact, internally and externally. It is only in having this well rounded view that an organisation can be in a position to improve and at the same time be able to prove thus evidencing its achievements and its contribution to social change.

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

Redefining education of indigenous children

Residential Schooling has a long history. While the objective has been different in different regions, the very idea of residential schooling supports inculcation of native culture and values, in the process of preparing children to face the competitive world. Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) is the world's largest residential school for indigenous children that has demonstrated the same. KISS provides free holistic education from Kindergarten to Post-graduation and is equipped with all amenities. With a humble beginning in 1993, KISS is now a renowned landmark in the city of Bhubaneswar.

KISS was founded by Dr Achyuta Samanta, a visionary who lost his father at a very young age. Having realised the importance of education in the lives of poor from his own struggle, he established an ITI centre in 1992 with the help of a grant and a minimal amount collected as loans from friends and well-wishers. Achyuta decided to utilise profits emerging from this ITI centre to build a residential school for indigenous tribal children living in around Odisha. In 1993, the school was established in a rented accommodation, admitting 125 children from poor labour classes mostly belonging to the tribal community.

Today, ITI has succeeded in providing technical education on a large scale and has grown to be Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, capable of providing professional training in more than 20 different streams. A portion of the turnover from this institute supports the activities of KISS.

"These two institutions of academic repute have succeeded together only because of the vision and passion behind them," says Mr Suraj Roy, Deputy Director of Resource Mobilisation at KISS. A single residential facility housing 25,308 tribal children in a green campus is not common. Roy feels that KISS's vision and the passion of its founder Dr. Samanta has guided the institutions at every step of its evolution and will continue to do so. Recognising the model it has come to be, Roy feels that KISS has redefined the fundamental principles of tribal education. "Almost one-fourth population in Odisha are tribals and most of them are poor. Their struggle for survival does not allow them to prioritise education, which is the most crucial factor in changing their lives. There are 62 different tribes in Odisha who speak around 40 different languages. Oriya as the medium of instruction in Government Schools is a challenge for the tribal children as they are unable to cope with the syllabus and therefore dropout. Breaking this language barrier with the help of local teachers and teaching in their mother tongue has been the critical factor in KISS's acceptance in the community,"



he explains, adding that 60 percent of the children at KISS are girls.

KISS has always endeavoured to acknowledge the culture of indigenous children, that has completely different norms for social behaviour, personal hygiene and adolescent health. "We encourage children to explore the same in the light of other cultures. They understand diversity and learn to respect/accept different cultures. This understanding allows them to easily mingle with members outside their communities. By now, language barrier is broken and children are confident to interact with any new person," shares Roy. The sense of belongingness in teachers, he feels, makes them peers in the campus. The nature of interaction that gradually builds encourages them to go back and work for their communities.

KISS graduates who come back to teach have been of great help in handling apprehensions of new comers and vulnerable children. This has also helped to contain the dropout rate, which is below one percent. Roy adds that the range of activities included in their routine helps them to adjust to the new

atmosphere and relate to lessons learnt from life skills classes. Further, the nature of these interactions encourage them to teach the families and peers, and building a chain of impact in the family and at a community level thereby contributing to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals and now, the Sustainable Development Goals in Odisha.

The achievements of KISS's children repose faith in the vision and the principles that have governed KISS over the years. To name a few, children have won international Rugby championships, participated in Asian Games, represented Asia in a live discussion over video conferencing with the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in 2013, and participated in UN Malala Day celebrations at UN Head Quarters in New York.

Two alumni also established the first ever Ashoka ventures from tribal background. KISS has been awarded Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council by the UN and is also approved by the UN Department of Public Information. No

doubt it has been ranked 223rd amongst the top 500 NGOs in the world by NGO Advisor.

The change and impact brought about by KISS has been well recognised and the fact that KISS's management has been invited by the State Governments across the country for consultation on tribal education stands testimony to this.

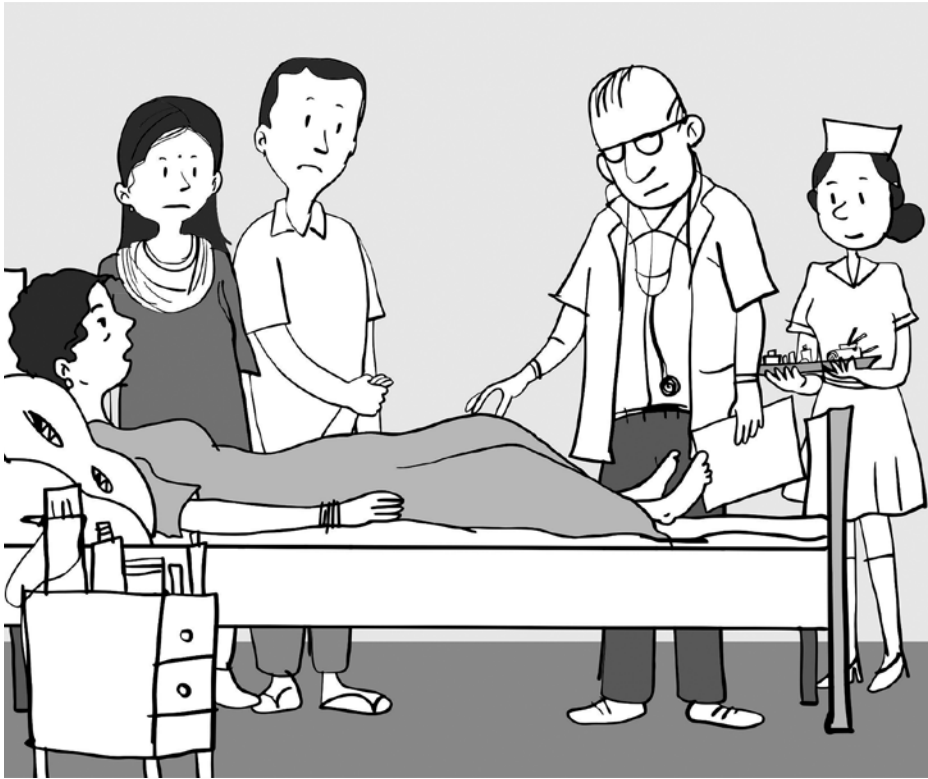
KISS is on a mission of educating two lakh indigenous tribal children in the next decade. Efforts are already on to establish branches in different districts of Odisha and across the country. "KISS alumni in TISS, IIT, IIMs, as Railway employees, Olympic medalists, entrepreneurs, bankers, researchers, etc. has left us dreaming big.

KISS and UNDP recently signed a historic agreement to jointly establish a Centre of Excellence for Skill and Entrepreneurship Development at KISS. KISS has also introduced the Kalinga Fellowship for international students," says a proud Roy, quickly adding that the first international student from Ethiopia joined KISS in 2017.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Nruthya Bodhini – Musings of an Artiste

09 – Dark Clouds shadowing the ray of hope



“Amma, trust me! I know you will be fine soon. Please agree to take the treatment in big hospital. Don't worry about me and home. I will take care of it all and I will take care of you too. Just say 'yes' and you can get admitted tomorrow itself” Sadhana pleaded with her mother who was laid up in bed weak and tired.

When sorrows come, they come not single spies But in battalions
–Shakespeare's Hamlet, 1602

Sadhana's life is a complete roller coaster ride. Just when she thinks life is smooth and going fine, there would be something that happens that puts it into a challenging spin. As Sadhana was figuring out a way into the jungles of the dance industry, Amma noticed she was getting weaker with rheumatoid arthritis spreading to both knees and hands. Almost 6 months of alternate medicines had only rendered cursory relief and slowly Amma had hit the bed unable to walk. Appa, who had never really managed the house all on his own was confused completely and Sadhana was caught in managing the house, finances and her studies. The doctors had advised a one month treatment for arthritis at the hospital with complete rest till she regains her

strength to walk again. Sadhana had to manage her college classes, hospital duty and also take care of home and food requirements. It was never in her to disappoint anyone or not do her best to see all were happy. With the pressure mounting, the thoughts of furthering her art career had slowly relegated to the background. Her mother had been her backbone completely and now Sadhana felt very helpless without her mother's support.

“I want to talk to you both”, said Appa one evening sitting in the hospital room. “You both know I have been having serious difficulties at office working with my Boss. They are even planning to transfer me to a far-away centre and I just can't do the travel especially when Amma is laid up like this. So I am thinking I will take voluntary retirement and stay home”. “What! how can we manage the home with all the expenses. Also, Sadhana is so good in her studies that she should be doing her masters next two years”. If you quit now you won't get full pension. What will we do?” screamed Amma agitatedly. “Not this now”, murmured Sadhana to herself. She knew her father usually escaped problems than face them and if anyone can counsel him it would be she since he trusted her judgements the most.

Sadhana gulped a lump of anxiety choking her throat and said, “We will deal with this issue, Appa. Don't worry. You just have another 3 years to go for retirement. We have your good friend Uncle Chandra who can give you the right advice to handle the Boss. I will call him on Sunday for lunch and we all will discuss. For now, let's wait a bit. Let's get complete medical help for Amma first. Let her come back home from hospital. Pray to your favourite lord Ganesha and all will be fine”.

Social entrepreneurship is all about facing the challenges yet not giving up the idea that one has begun to execute. The backbone and spinal cord of the team may suddenly leave or fall sick. Priorities for the core team members may change. Managing everything else becomes a priority than pursuing the original idea that they set out for. An organization be it social or corporate has its own life cycles. The ups are the time when every idea has to be capitalised. The downs are the time when values have to be

strengthened and review of the vision takes priority. Every difficult moment comes in life for a purpose and the chiselling maybe very painful, but the result would be long lasting. Similarly, at the end of this phase, Sadhana had turned out to be someone who could withstand most difficult moments in life trusting herself.

Within a week, monsoon began with heavy rains and the 45 year old house began leaking everywhere.

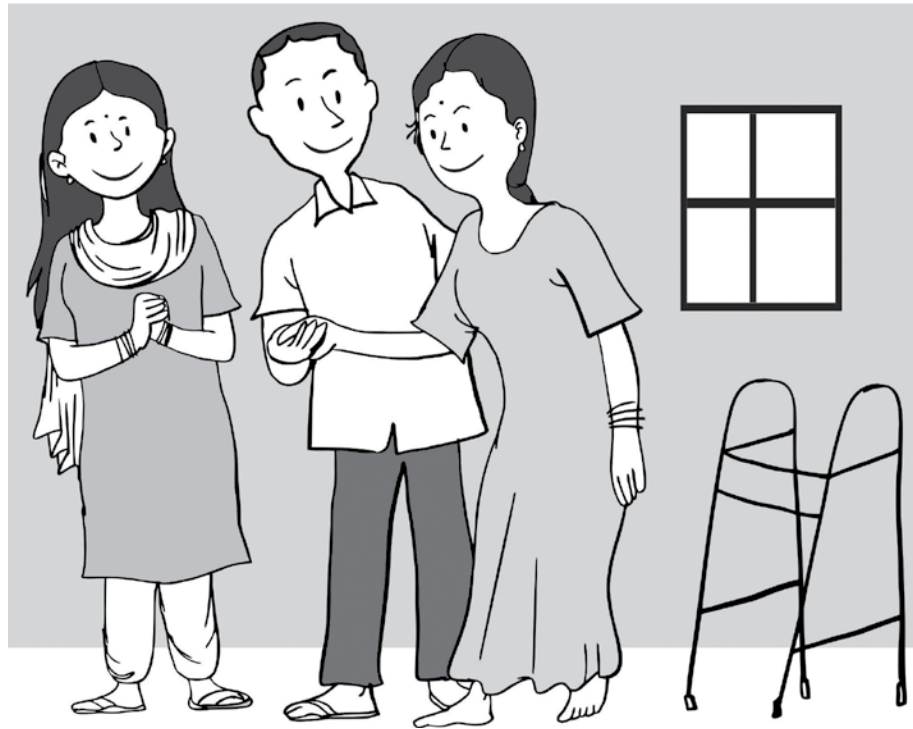
Decision was taken that the house needs to be reconstructed in most parts and would cost significant budget.

Sadhana saw that as a good strategy to ensure her dad does not leave his job. This pushed her to gather all support from friends and extended family to get the project going from design to completion. The days were too long and the entire day filled with decision making situations and managing people and construction requirements. Just like a thin young leaf shook with the night winds, in the solace and silence of the night, Sadhana found



time to cry her heart out and manage to build courage for the following day.

Pray and you will see miracles happening. Why not go to Infant Jesus church? Make a vow that in nine weeks your mom will be able to walk on her own and every Thursday say the prayer and light a candle at the church...go to Hanuman temple every morning for 48 days and do your prayers...advice from her dance teacher and friends built a strong anchor for the otherwise pressurised Sadhana. Amongst all the activities she found time to do her prayers with an undying commitment. This brought her closer to herself and her feelings with the universal consciousness hearing to her intent and resolve to see through the challenges with success. From then on God had become her companion and best friend that she can talk to in all her troubles and tribulations through life. The unrelenting commitment that she followed in her prayers instilled a discipline within her to pursue her other activities through day without giving up. She found students to teach



dance, do small documentation work and made some money to tide over her everyday needs.

Lo! Miracles happen. One Thursday, coming straight from church, Sadhana

rushed to the hospital and a surprise awaited her. "Sadhana, I was just waiting for you. See here, I can walk now, my legs are better! Oh, I am so happy. Our prayers are answered",

shrieked her mom excitedly. Sadhana saw her mom walking in the corridor holding her Dad's hand! "Mom, you are coming home soon then". Sadhana had a wide grin on her face and gratitude in her heart as she was seeing the end of a long winding tunnel.

Is there an anchorage for a social entrepreneur and how to build the self-belief to allow miracles to happen? Every social entrepreneur requires a high amount of self-belief and a whole lot of miracles to happen for the journey of transformation that they embark on. It is very important to know the difference between what one wants done and what needs to be done. Whenever there is alignment in both, miracles happen. Universe always dwells in the realm of what needs to be done and human dwells in what one wants done. To have this alignment in place, the social entrepreneur should be in the flow, willing to accept the challenges, face them with grit, take the learnings and receive the grace and help from all quarters to make things happen.

To be continued...stay connected...

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath

Mutual Help



A group of representatives were sent from earth to see what made hell and heaven. The group first went to hell, where it found everybody suffering, though hell looked a rich place. This surprised the group. It was lunch time in hell and they were puzzled to see that the hell dwellers were looking famished and angry in spite of rich food being served in abundance. On closer observation they realised the hell dwellers had no elbow joints because of which they were unable to bend their arms and eat, though food was available in plenty. So all of them starved and kept quarreling with each other.

Then, the representatives went to heaven and found the conditions similar to those in hell. It was dinner time and they rushed to the dining hall. The heaven dwellers looked happy, well-fed and contented. The representatives observed that their arms too were the same as those of the hell dwellers, yet they were not unhappy. The representatives found the dwellers were happy as they realised that the delicious food kept on the table was meant for serving others and not themselves. So they collected enough food from the table and fed each other. All of them got plenty to eat and nobody went hungry.



Explicit Learning

- Mutual help leads to happiness and contentment.
- Lack of mutual help had led to starvation in Hell.
- Earth would become heaven if we learned to care for each other.



Introspective Learning

- What is the nature of 'Mutual Help'?
- Why do I fail to see the benefit of mutual help?
- What is the extent of my selfishness?

“My career transition from the newsroom to the courtroom may be construed as dramatic, but it all boils down to communication.”

Sanjay Pinto talks to Marie Banu about his book ‘Justice for All’.

It’s a transition from the newsroom to the courtroom. Before donning the black gown as a lawyer in the Madras High Court, representing celebrity clients - media owners, international sportspersons, political leaders, bureaucrats and film stars, Sanjay Pinto was the Resident Editor of NDTV 24x7 and the Executive Editor of NDTV Hindu. A household name and the face of NDTV in South India for a decade and a half, this Gold Medalist from Loyola College and ace debater from the Dr. Ambedkar Government Law College has been an award winning national media personality.

Sanjay is the face and voice of Chennai on almost all prime time national tv channel debates. ‘Justice For All’ is a popular weekly legal column that Sanjay writes for the Deccan Chronicle focusing on a slew of legal issues and ‘Corridors of Power’ on top bureaucrats in Ritz Magazine.

Having won quite a few widely reported cases in Court, Sanjay was selected by the United States Government to represent India in the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) on the ‘Rule of Law & Judicial Reforms’ in the United States of America in February, 2014.

Seldom do you come across a person who has straddled every form of the media - television, print, radio, online and now even media law. Extremely active in the social media through his Facebook posts, tweets & LinkedIn updates, Sanjay used to write a national column on the social media for The Hindu and was the Brand Ambassador of the US Chennai Consulate’s Facebook page when it was launched.

Sanjay has been a talk show host on Chennai Live 104.8 FM, is an Author of the Bestselling Book ‘Speakers Are Made Not Born’, a Public Speaking Mentor of the Silver Tongue Academy Resource and a former National Debating Champion with a record 106 victories in inter-collegiate debates and now a regular panelist on prime time tv debates on most English News Channels and Guest Lecturer on Media Law at Symbiosis Law School, Pune.

An eloquent Speaker at Seminars & Summits, Sanjay regularly moderates Panel Discussions and Conferences across India. A recipient of the Rotary ‘Vocational Excellence Award’ for his distinguished service in television journalism and the Rotary ‘For The Sake Of Honour’ award for his contribution to society through Law & the Media, the former ‘breaking news’ man continues to fight for truth and justice.

In an exclusive interview, Sanjay Pinto talks to Marie Banu about his book ‘Justice for All’.

About your childhood, education, family?

I come from a middle class family with middle class values born out of middle class struggles. My parents are retired salaried staff. My father A.V. Pinto was an employee of Binny and my mother Judy Pinto was a teacher at Don Bosco, Egmore, where I also studied. They gave me the best education possible. Post Don Bosco, Egmore, I graduated in History & Politics at Loyola College, with a Gold Medal and the Best Outgoing Student Award. At the Dr. Ambedkar Government Law College, I emerged a National Debating Champion.

My wife Vidya is a television journalist turned college lecturer turned communication mentor. We are blessed with 6 year old twin angels - Sanvi & Vidan.

From Newsroom to Courtroom. What was the reason for this change?

In 2012, I saw a picture of my 9 month old daughter Sanvi trying to talk to me through the tv. It was a game changer and a catalyst for my decision to move from the rat race of breaking news to a more organised career with a relatively more predictable schedule. My target audience changed from viewers to my family. That was not the only reason. I began to sniff out symptoms of burn out and stagnation in NDTV. My Job Title Changed to Resident Editor, but my Job Description remained the same - as a Reporter on the field. I also wanted to put my God given talent of speaking to greater use and to earn more money.

You see, lawyers have no retirement age and Law is where the big bucks exist, at least after clocking in the years. So, 5 years ago, I played the Prodigal Son, quit the mainstream media and plunged into Law Practice. But, I still have one foot in the media through my columns, prime time tv debates and writing books - ‘Speakers Are Made Not Born’ and my recently released law book for the layman ‘Justice For All’.

My career transition from the newsroom to the courtroom may be construed as dramatic, but it all boils down to communication - before the camera then and before a judge now. Law Practice has a big gestation period. So, before I made the switch, I kept a nest egg ready to tide over the financial vagaries of the legal profession.

Have you used media to highlight any pressing social issue and was the effort successful?

The role of a journalist is to speak truth to power. I have rattled many skeletons in the cupboard, and exposed scams. I remember exposing a land grabbing racket in Pondicherry in 1998 which led to a CBI probe. In 15 years in NDTV, I have lost count of the stories that made an impact. I have covered some of the biggest breaking news - natural disasters like the tsunami, sensational midnight arrests of political and religious leaders, air crashes, communal clashes, prison riots, narcotics smuggling, and assassination attempts like the one on Chandrababu Naidu in Tirupati. I was among the first few tv journalists to use the hidden camera in investigative reports.

You had the opportunity to interview several celebrities and top leaders of our country. Any nostalgic moments you wish to share?

I have covered leaders across the political divide, international sportspersons, and actors. Almost

breaking the security cordon to interview former Prime Minister Vajpayee, an argument with tennis champion Boris Becker during a press conference, travelling with the Indian Cricket Team to Colombo for the Asia Cup in 2004, former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Late Ms. Jayalalithaa stopping her convoy in Trichy to give me an interview during her election campaign in 2011 and calling out to me after meeting BJP patriarch L.K. Advani in Chennai in 2012, and playing chess with my school senior Viswanathan Anand during a shoot (I don’t know a thing about the game!) are quite unforgettable.

Can you tell us about your recent book ‘Justice for All’?

As a tv journalist, the accent was always on brevity and simplicity in reportage. Even the most complex news stories had to be told in sixty seconds. Laws and judgments are often lengthy and replete with heavy legal jargon that a common man would often find difficult to comprehend. Moreover, during my journalistic career, I always felt that there was a disconnect between what viewers wanted and what was dished out to them with that overdose of politics. That’s what prompted me to approach Deccan Chronicle 2 years ago to write a weekly column on legal issues. My book ‘Justice For All’ is a compendium of longer versions of many of those columns. It deals with 24 branches of law - from consumer protection to criminal law, property and banking to constitutional law and animal welfare. It is meant to be a ready legal reckoner, primarily for the layman.

In the 86 chapters in my book, readers will get an essence of their legal rights on a broad spectrum of issues that would confront them in their daily life. I have raised questions, challenged unfair provisions in bills before they are passed by Parliament, pointed out lacunae and championed the cause of the common man.

My target audience is the layman. But even high Constitutional functionaries like the Tamil Nadu Governor Mr. Vidyasagar Rao, who wrote the Foreword, said that he liked my columns on constitutional controversies, particularly the role of the Governor in the Indian political context. The back cover with testimonials from titans of journalism like Arnab Goswami, my friend and former colleague, legal luminaries, a renowned academician and a law student from the No.1 Law School in India proves the reach and relevance of my book. Published by Covenant Media, it is priced at Rs.499 and is available at Odyssey, Star Mark, Sitaraman & Co. amazon.in and flipkart.com

