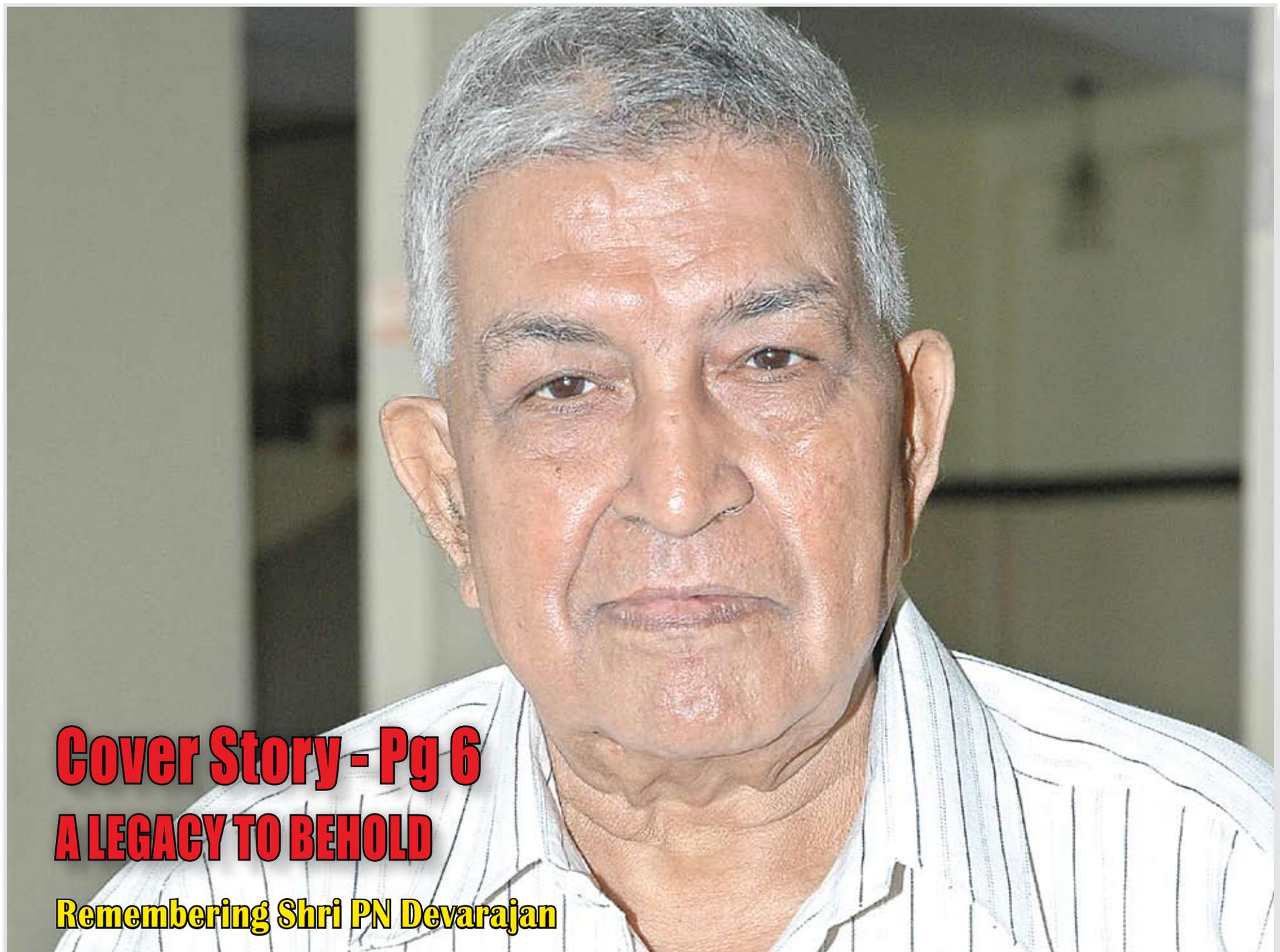


# Conversations Today

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## Cover Story - Pg 6 A LEGACY TO BEHOLD

Remembering Shri PN Devarajan



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### Changemakers Pg 3

Including them About Sristi Foundation in Thazhuthali village in Dindivanam district that works toward an inclusive society



### Trendsetters Pg 4

Weaving Livelihoods About Weaver Bird, a social enterprise that promotes the use of organic, hand spun and hand woven cotton



### Trailblazer Pg 5

Understanding Common Needs About Swatantra Talim Foundation that runs a model after school for rural children in Lucknow



### Chit Chat Pg 12

“Social Entrepreneurship is applying thinking to solve problems, even if you don't have resources.”  
An exclusive interview with Mr. Sonam Wangchuk

# From the Editor

Dear reader,

It is said that the first ingredient of success is to dream a great dream. If you can dream it, you can do it! Have we ever heard of anyone dreaming of failure or aspiring to be unsuccessful? Failure does not play any part in dreaming. It is the dreamer that instills failure, not the dream.

Many successful dreamers have failed numerous times before they experienced success. The difference is that failure was not going to end their dreams, but only motivated them to dream bigger. One such dreamer was our Founder Late Shri P.N. Devarajan, fondly called as PND, who was a visionary, a philanthropist, and above all a great human being. He always said: *“Dreaming is the easy part, but acting on the dream is harder. This is because it takes commitment, time, desire, and courage to recognise a dream as a journey and fulfil it.”*

PND’s first step to fulfil his dream of making the social work organisations sustainable was to offer training in Social Entrepreneurship through CSIM. Today, we have several social work organisations taking the path of entrepreneurship and making their programmes sustainable.

A true leader and a visionary, PND firmly believed in the concept of **‘Each one, reach one’**. *This would lead to more of ‘giving’ and result in ‘getting’ to ‘giving’ as a way of life. If this attitude of ‘giving’ gets rooted in the family, it gets the ‘nourishment’ and ‘growth’ in society.* This was his deep rooted belief and these words has inspired many, and today we are surrounded by several changemakers across all age groups and sectors.

The Sadguru Gnanananda awards for social entrepreneurs, instituted by the MSDS Trust founded by PND in 2000, was a pioneering initiative to celebrate the work done by these ‘givers’ of society. The MSDS National Fellowship Awards 2017 event is scheduled on 25th November, 2017 with Dr. Kiran Bedi, Hon’ble Lt. Governor of Puducherry, as the Chief Guest. We honored her with the Sadguru Gnanananda award in 2006 and she in turn would be giving away the awards this year.

We will all certainly miss PND but we strongly believe that he is with us in thought and spirit and will continue being our guiding angel.

Please do join us to celebrate the work done by three budding social entrepreneurs and enable us to continue living the dream of PND!

—Marie Banu & Latha Suresh

# The Servant Leader

*“We need leaders who put service over self, who can be steadfast through crises and failures, who want to stay present and make a difference to the people, situations and causes they care about. We need leaders who are committed to serving people, who recognize what is being lost in the haste to dominate, ignore and abuse the human spirit..... Let us use whatever power and influence we have, working with whatever resources are already available, mobilizing the people who are with us to work for what they care about. Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”* —Margaret Wheatley

Though these words have been told by Margaret Wheatley, a leadership expert who combines the heart and the mind for resolute action, these were also the words shared by Mr P.N. Devarajan, a practicing servant leader, founder of MSDS Trust and my father. He passed away on November 2, 2017. Barely a week later I’m writing this article because I wanted to bring forth my realizations about servant leadership, which I saw my father live in his life.

Robert Greenleaf, the person who first articulated about Servant Leadership narrates, how the idea of The Servant as Leader came to him because of reading a book by Herman Hesse, *Journey to the East*.

It is the story of a band of men on a mythical journey. The key person in the story is Leo. He is a servant who does chores for the travelers, but he also lifts their morale with his positive spirit and his singing. He is the glue that holds the group together. The travelers all sense Leo’s extraordinary presence.

The journey goes well until one day when Leo disappears. Without Leo, the group falls apart, and the journey has to be abandoned. They

simply can’t continue.

The traveler who tells the story goes looking for Leo, and after some years of wandering, he finds Leo. He discovers that Leo, whom he had known first as servant, was in fact the titular head of the Order that sponsored the journey. Leo is its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader.

This story clearly says that the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness. Leo was actually the leader all of the time, but he was servant first because that was what he was, deep down inside. That was his true character. He was given a leadership position, but he was by nature a servant—someone who was focused on helping others. The leadership position that was given to him could be taken away. His servant nature—his desire to help others—was a part of his character, and it could not be taken away. That’s why he was a servant first, a servant at heart.

In my understanding, servant leaders exhibit humility, coming from a source of service. It is a state from where resolute action emerges but it is not abrasive, it is inspiring. In today’s world where many of us live with the attitude of I, me, mine, servant leadership offers a way to develop and grow as communities beyond being individualistic. I have experienced servant leadership as one where the leader revels in the accomplishments and potential of others. S/he celebrates others’ achievements and invests in developing people as leaders.

Such a leader also asks questions, enables people make their decisions, supports them in bouncing back from mistakes/failures. This is a person with immense optimism, curiosity and zest to serve more and more. Somebody who outgrows the family structure and embraces the society as

her/his own.

Life is lived by living it and not by planning to live it. Servant leadership makes living a reality as the leader engages with people, belongs to communities s/he serves and is immersed in learning, doing and moving forward. While results matter, servant leaders are not limited by it. There is an endless thirst to persuade more and more people to unleash their energies and empower themselves to contribute to the society.

In a world which is getting more and more fixated with material success, with holding power and desire for endless individual growth, servant leadership is a way to embrace. While many aspects of being a servant leader seem innate, it can be learned. Volunteer work can be an excellent ‘power’ neutralizer. Through volunteering one can become aware of the power of relationships with others and express empathy and respect for others through service.

Would you like to explore the life of a servant leader? Would you like to be one?

Let go your instincts to survive and embrace the life of service.

My father, called PND by his friends and followers, stood for the practice of servant leadership. He saw opportunities to serve in all the problems that were posed to him. I seek to embody the practice of servant leadership, keep an open mind and heart and to fill every heart with hope and optimism. To see everything the way it is, devoid of limiting judgments, with a heart of compassion and willingness.

If you wish to walk this path, pledge your support with MSDS’ 4T Pledge, please visit [www.msdsrust.org](http://www.msdsrust.org).

—Bhuvaneshwari Ravi

**MANAVA SEVA DHARMA SAMVARDHANI**  
*(A Charitable Trust for the Promotion of Social Citizenry)*

**XVIII SADGURU GNANANANDA NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP AWARDS - 2017**  
*for budding Social Entrepreneurs*



**Venue:** Swami Vivekananda Rural Community College (Near KanagaChetty Kulam), Puducherry Via East Coast Road, Tamilnadu – 605 014

**Date:** Saturday, 25th November, 2017  
**Time:** 12:30 PM to 1:30 PM

**Chief Guest:** Dr. Kiran Bedi  
Hon’ble Lt. Governor of Puducherry

**Sadguru Gnanananda 2017 Fellows**

**1. Mr.G. Karthikeyan**, Sristi Foundation  
Thazhuthali village, Tamilnadu

**2. Ms. Medha Shah**, Weaver Bird,  
Vadodara, Gujarat

**3. Ms. Ms Ridhi Aggarwal**, Swatantra  
Talim Foundation, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

# Including them

An inclusive society in its true sense is still an elusive dream. In our society, we have been trying to comprehend and realise inclusivity since independence. Different strategies, different interventions; yet we have a few sections always left out of mainstream. We have come a long way forward, yet there are some sections of the population for whom inclusion is 'made to seem inappropriate'. One such section is the intellectually challenged adults. "Even after going through a special school and adapting themselves as much as they can to the mainstream practices, intellectually challenged persons are not treated as capable individuals. This apathy led me to dream of a space exclusively for them," says Mr G.Karthikeyan, Founder and Director of Sristi Foundation in Kunamangalam village in Villupuram district.

Unable to support his education, Karthikeyan's parents admitted him in an orphanage. This is where he got to spend time with children and adults with intellectual, developmental disabilities. He saw that the idea of inclusion was practiced here in routine life. Living with differently abled and intellectually challenged, he realised the struggle for social integration each one had to face. "While children like me had a set trajectory to follow from schooling to employment and then social integration, I saw them struggling with every phase. They did not get enough opportunities and were restricted to their routine lives within the orphanage," he laments. As children, nobody realised the differences between them – all children played together and fought against each other. "As children we were all equal. We all had the same rules. I used to fight with the intellectually challenged mates as well. In my teens when I realised that they were different from me, I felt guilty for all my mischiefs, but today I am very proud of those incidents," he asserts.

Intrigued by their lives and the treatment they received from the society, Karthikeyan decided to pursue his graduation in Psychology. In 2004, he became the Director of the orphanage where he was brought up and observed that there were no special programmes for the differently abled. He thus established the Baby Sara Special School to hone the skills of these children and mentor them for an independent adulthood. However, after spending years at the special school, they hardly had anything to do in the outside world. "Everything outside seemed normal and content without them, while they, on the other hand, were looking forward to mingle with the outside world and contribute their part," he says. Therefore, the onus was again on them to prepare themselves, this time in technical



education so that they can qualify for professional work.

Now that the inmates tried and got qualified, the potential employers threw new excuses at them, questioning the safety aspects of letting them work with machines independently. "There was fear and hesitation everywhere," he says.

Karthikeyan eventually gave up all his efforts in enabling the general public to understand the capabilities of the intellectually challenged persons. Losing all hope in changing the attitude of the community, he decided to prepare his inmates to face the society. Vocational training brought in new avenues to engage them productively, but the attitude of buyers disturbed him again. "Marketing was very tough and all those who purchased our products did not see the value in the creation, they did so for charity. Is there no value for their skills?" questions Karthikeyan, who was disheartened to see all his efforts at providing livelihood turn futile.

Karthikeyan travelled across India in search of a model or an approach that could be replicated, but found that the problem was universal. There were special schools and learning centres, but no answer to their dependency in adulthood. While brainstorming options to engage them, one girl saw the orphanage staff bringing vegetables from the market and asked Karthikeyan: Why can't we grow our own vegetables? An instant liking to the idea gave birth to their kitchen garden.

Karthikeyan was happy to see their

interest in gardening and responded to all their intriguing queries on how plants grew and produced vegetables. "One boy did not believe that a huge plant came out of a small seed. I just told him to water the seedling every day and see what happened. When leaves came out, he thought it was magic and was more devoted to plant maintenance. That was the moment of change. All of them followed their roles and responsibilities. And then the day of harvesting arrived. Our inmates were so excited about their produce. They approached the chef confidently and declared that they will decide the menu based on what they produced in the garden. Their confidence, involvement and the growing knowledge on soil health, water management and weather details amazed all of us. We gave them a responsibility and they gained their respect," he recalls satisfactorily.

This development encouraged Karthikeyan to set up a village where abled and differently abled could live together in harmony, as equal residents. He believed that a dignified life was everyone's right and differences in ability cannot undermine one's right to a dignified life. He undertook a seven-month long training in Kerala and soon embarked on the journey of establishing the Sristi Village in 2014. After a long struggle for funds, he acquired ten acres of land and started the farm activities. After a survey in the complete block, he estimated the number of intellectually challenged persons who could become a member of Sristi family



Karthikeyan

and accordingly planned further development. Zero budget natural farming was practiced and inmates, along with volunteers played a significant role in operationalizing the five layer model developed for Sristi village, now equipped with a dairy farm and vermin-compost pit. Eco friendly, energy efficient huts for inmates and volunteers, pipeline for irrigation and other facilities were set up one by one, making Sristi a sustainable village. Presently, there are 40 residents that includes 20 intellectually challenged persons, 10 volunteers and 10 support staff. Frequent events are also organised at the village reaching out to the parents of intellectually challenged persons. "Each one of them had a responsibility and they gave it their best. They knew the significance of their roles and therefore respected each other. They all got the space to do something and Sristi is delighted to see the transformation in them," says Karthikeyan.

As Mailam block had no school or centre for the intellectually challenged children/adults, Sristi Foundation also established the Sristi Special School and Sristi Vocational Training Centre in Thazhuthali village. The progress and reach in a span of five years also encouraged Karthikeyan to advocate farming as an entrepreneurial venture through the Sristi Farm Academy. Given that our economy is primarily agrarian, he wanted the farm academy to provide systematic farm and agricultural-based training to people with intellectual disabilities and the marginalised non-disabled, empowering them with the confidence and skills they need to initiate their own entrepreneurial projects.

"Being self-reliant is any individual's biggest achievement, so too for the intellectually challenged. It gives them the confidence to move ahead in life. It allows them to distinctly identify needs and responsibilities. To enable this cycle of realisation, we need to give them their space. Sristi village is one experiment that has demonstrated the possibility and potential of this idea," concludes Karthikeyan, emphasising that we can be an inclusive society.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

# Weaving Livelihoods

Sustaining traditional livelihoods is a challenge the present generation has to confront, in order to protect and revive them. For, they are not just skills or practices that can be understood in isolation, but an assembly of layered practices in a holistic system, that struggles to survive in the era of mechanisation. “Members who depend on such a system are ultimately forced to give up and look for other means of livelihood relevant to the market conditions or lose all hopes of surviving in the economy and become nihilistic. It is a very dangerous predicament for our artisans and the economy of job creation. We have already seen the crisis farmers are going through,” warns Ms Medha Shah, Founder of the social enterprise ‘Weaver Bird’ in Vadodara, Gujarat.

Medha hails from a family rooted in the values of non-violence and sarvodaya (upliftment of all masses). Having seen her parents work for farmers’ welfare and advocate organic farming to ensure sustainable agriculture, seed sovereignty, she was always aware of the lives of small, marginal farmers. “Farmers over the time, have become plain workers in the field who fulfil market demands. And the market dictates are inconsiderate of what these farmers have to go through. Although organic farming was catching up, the farmers who go through a cycle of compromise and a lean transition period, do not benefit from the treatment market gives to organic products. It is farmers who know the actual value of their creation and therefore they cannot be forgotten after procurement,” says Medha.

While this inclination to think for farmers was natural, given her family background, Medha was interested in pursuing textile designing. She graduated from the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design in Jaipur and began her career with small projects in her hometown. Medha’s vision for her career changed when a farmer enquired her father if she could do something with the organic cotton they produced. Until then, they were not given any premium for their organic produce. She started working with the farmer in 2012, procured cotton from him, processed it through artisan groups and sold the finished products at exhibitions. She also shared the profits with the farmer. While this continued for three years on a small scale, Medha also worked on other freelance projects. “I was managing my survival and social responsibility at the same time. Bringing them together was very appealing yet the challenges that might come along put me on hold. Not for long though,” she laughs.

She was completely aware that working with more farmers meant protection of livelihood for so many farmer groups.



Medha Shah

However, the production challenges and the responsibility of finding new buyers gave her doubts. “When I started working with one farmer, he expected only 10 percent premium and the amount of work, labour and time in selling the produce was minimal. It was all manageable within my resource limitations. Later when five more farmers showed interest on learning the share of profit and premium, I was forced to think of a strategy that can engage more

farmers over the years, progressively,” recalls Medha.

She called for a meeting with interested farmers and attempted to learn their expectations in terms of premium, which was 30 percent. While Medha agreed to this, she also asserted that it would be her discretion in terms of profit sharing. For, she was not yet completely aware of the time and work required to market all the produce. “More products meant that I might have to go to more exhibitions in different cities. I may also have to hire a help. Promising a share of profit might discourage them if I do not manage to find new buyers. I could not afford that,” she says. As the farmers agreed to such an arrangement, Medha left her job and began engaging here full time.

Thus was born Weaver Bird in 2016, a social enterprise to promote the use of organic, hand spun and hand woven cotton as a conscious fashion choice. Her farmers’ groups in Rajkot cultivate cotton organically, which is then purchased by Weaver Bird for a premium. The artisans’ groups then process the cotton using natural dyes and herbal wash with shikakai and reetha to soften the fabric. Handling the designing responsibility herself, she is overwhelmed with the creativity and ease

with which farmers and artisans understand the significance of sustainable livelihoods. “Every time I interact with them, I sense that they see this venture as their social responsibility too. It motivates me,” she says.

Medha herself is amused by the chain of impact her brand has created on the farmers’ and artisans’ groups. Being the most polluting cash crop and now becoming the largest single organic crop, she is very hopeful of promoting Weaver Bird on a large scale.

Weaver Bird’s collection includes apparels for both men and women – kurtas, tunics and stoles. Apart from the range of products, raw fabric is also sold in some places. Since revenue from organic cotton is export dependent, she feels that it will take some time for the domestic market to come to terms with the potential of this fabric. “There is awareness and that is the reason why market for organic produce is growing fast. While it was impelling to look at organic food, organic clothing will take a while, but will surely take roots. Weaver Bird now needs to focus on networking to reach out to the right buyers,” says Medha, hoping to set a trend in the culture of sustainable clothing.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

# A school of a kind

**E**ducation as a fundamental right has made a lot of difference in the lives of underprivileged children. However, there is a new concern that is dominating the debate on Indian education—its relevance. How easily can children associate what they learn with real life situations? Are some sections of the society forced to learn what the others do? Why should it be so? Can they not learn it in ways that suit their routine lives? These and other pertinent questions in the context of rural education forced Ms Ridhi Aggarwal, Co-Founder of Swatantra Talim Foundation in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh to develop a model after school for rural children. Today, it is an after school that every one of us wished were a part of.

After her schooling in Lucknow, Ridhi graduated from the Delhi School of Economics in Delhi. Soon after her post-graduation, she worked for Edelweiss Capital in Delhi. All along, she was also involved in different social activities and her constant engagement made it clear that she would do something for children. And evidently, she was more content with her volunteering commitments during weekends and looked forward to spending time with those children. Encouraged by her husband, Mr Rahul Aggarwal, with whom she co-founded the Foundation, she gave up her corporate job and embarked on a journey of volunteering with different organisations in the Capital. After about a year and a half, she realised that she wanted to work in the field of rural education.

“I hate and despise rote learning. It is not education in any sense. I was interested in arts and crafts but the limitations they faced in promising a standard income made me wonder why everything was linked to earning potential. After an accident during my school days, I became an under performer and saw a complete transition in the way my teachers treated me. Attitude of teachers, friends and others around me changed suddenly. That is when I realised that academic performance determined way too many things than it should actually be doing. This led me to explore how education was perceived by different sections of the society and most of all, children. Do they really get to do what they aspire?,” questions Ridhi whose volley of questions then led her to pursue an M.A in Elementary Education from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

During her course and after, she got to visit many organisations working in rural education. Soon, she joined the Nalanda in Lucknow, managing the rural education programme for girls in 150 villages of Uttar Pradesh. Ridhi was now working with people from NGOs, people from the community and experts from outside, learning each of their perspectives on rural education. Her husband who accompanied her during the village visits also saw the way of things and felt that rural education needs to be different and easily applicable so that parents also saw the relevance in



letting their children continue secondary education without dropping out. Rahul too gave up his job as a Chartered Accountant and the couple together worked in Krishnamurthy School to gain formal experience in the sector. In 2013, they founded the Swatantra Talim Foundation in Lucknow.

They began working in a village called Ramduari, as they were familiar with the villagers from their days in Nalanda. While some of the villagers were eager to get their girls educated as a result of the previous programme, there were also others who found education irrelevant to their children as they were anyways destined to work on their fields. The couple were working hard to develop simple, hands on tools to help children learn different concepts through activities. But every time they came across parents who questioned the relevance of education for their children, they wondered what they were trying to do. “Every such conversation baffled us. We became uncertain about what we must do for these children. Parents’ concerns seemed reasonable but daunting too. We felt lost,” recalls Ridhi.

During a class on alternative sources of energy, the girls exclaimed: “Is the energy from sun so powerful? Can these sources of energy solve our day to day problems.” The girls wanted to know if these renewable sources could charge mobile phones. Further probing, Ridhi and team realised the girls’ concerns. Most of the men in this village were artisans who stayed outside due to work and mobile phone was the only mode of communication with their fathers. They and their mothers walked ten kilometres to charge their mobile phones. The girls then decided to make a solar mobile charger and successfully made it, gathering inputs from videos, e-books, books and journals in the afterschool’s library. “When villagers saw the solar

mobile charger up and running, they were intrigued. They said that what we taught was actually of some use to their children. That is when we also realised that the need of the hour was a model that can showcase the relevance of education apart from job security,” smiles Ridhi.

On learning that children loved to explore, they devised a curriculum with unique methods that stimulated their aptitude and temper for new innovations that can improve their lives in the villages. Their model comprised of three stages – Khojdabba, Khojaalaya and Khojshaala. Khojdabba, meaning lab in a box is a collection of experiments and activities for children from classes 1-5 to help them learn age appropriate concepts through hands on activities. “Children complete the tasks and activities to come up with the concepts. Once they are clear with the concepts, which is facilitated through more activities at each stage, they graduate to Khojaalaya,” she adds.

Khojaalaya is a library where a variety of content is made available for children to read and make models they choose. As they are exposed to online content also, children develop the habit of exploring features of their models depending on their choice. They decide what they want to make, they decide the features and utility, then accordingly look for inputs that can lead further. Once children pass this stage, their areas of interest is clear to them and Ridhi’s team. We then guide them through their choices in higher education. “Two girls from our first batch have decided to pursue medicine,” says a proud Ridhi.

Khojshaala means lab in a community, where children identify specific issues in the village and work towards resolving them. Recently, children are developing a simple machine that can mechanise the task of cutting feeder crops (crops cultivated to feed the cows) from the field.



Ridhi Aggarwal

Until now, this was done manually with a heavy axe that consumed both time and energy. In order to reduce the time and effort spent on this, they developed a machine using a cycle. The cycle’s chain was adapted to work like a conveyor belt, attached to blades, wherein the cutting activity is taken care of while one rides the cycle across the field.

Swatantra Talim Foundation now runs two established learning centres in Ramduari village and Lucknow, reaching out to 180 children in all. With the success of these centres, Ridhi and Rahul are confident of their model and wish to integrate this with regular curriculum in schools. “We have begun our talks with some government schools and also low income private schools. The idea is to make Khojdabba as part of their curriculum so that more children can benefit from this model. We can never substitute formal schooling but can definitely work out simple models that can add more value to what children learn in schools. That is what we are trying to do,” she explains.

Ridhi is now also focusing on developing next line of teachers in her centres, by training girls from the same communities. She believes that a second line of teachers from the very community will help improve the model and ease its presentation to children. She is content with her girls’ results in the state board examination. “Two girls scored 85 percent and two others scored 75 percent. The success of our girls is a message that hands on learning does not take too much time, as it is popularly misunderstood to. They proved it. Enabling them in the process, we at Swatantra Talim Foundation have become an integral part of the communities,” smiles Ridhi.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

# A LEGACY TO BEHOLD



**Editorial**

Latha Suresh  
Marie Banu

Earlier this month, The Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani (MSDS) Trust lost its greatest pillar—the Founder Shri P N PND (PND)—who was in many ways, the rock that served as the sure foundation for the trust. Through the years, his yeomen service to society, and the resolve with which he built not just the spirit of social entrepreneurship but cultured the concept of social consciousness, will no doubt forever remain etched in the minds of his followers and keepers of his legacy. “A true visionary, PND brought to the social sector immense wealth of business and corporate experience,” says Bhuvanewari Ravi, MSDS Trustee and daughter of PND, “His views focused on meeting unmet needs and unleashing human potential to address social divides. He was particularly focused on integrating working for the society as a daily part of every individual’s life.” Those attitudes and that approach continue to hold great relevance today. After all, PND encouraged every individual with a social consciousness to make the leap of faith. Placed on priority, was the 4T focus-sharing: talent, touch, time and treasure. This included encouraging and developing capability in people – young and old alike – to become servant leaders, creating neighbourhood initiatives – serving causes in the neighbourhood and responding to local social causes, and laying emphasis on scaling out as opposed to scaling up. Bhuvanewari adds, “PND would often say: ‘small is beautiful, do not scale up and collapse under your weight, scale-out, encourage, enrol more social entrepreneurs to develop your ideas’.”

Early in its journey, MSDS Trust toiled hard to define and propagate the concept of social consciousness – the awareness that we are all servant leaders. In acknowledging this, lies the capability to grow beyond our needs and empower ourselves to eliminate and reduce social divides. Through the years, MSDS has supported social consciousness in individuals by building capabilities in budding social entrepreneurs through Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM), providing fellowships (monetary support as monthly living expenses for a period of three years) to early social entrepreneurs and celebrating social change agents, particularly

women social change agents. “Through these initiatives, MSDS brings together a cross section of society to engage in and witness social impact and contribute to society,” says Bhuvanewari.

MSDS has also successfully encouraged social citizenry by donating daal, oil and sugar every month (called the DOS programme) to NGOs supporting children, women, senior citizens and the differently-abled. The idea of social entrepreneurship promoted by MSDS rests on developing human capital. “And when we refer to ‘human capital’, we mean servant leaders who would relentlessly serve various social causes with humility. It is about kindling within individuals the spirit of service and combining it with organizational or business skills to start, manage and grow sustainable organizations,” says Bhuvanewari.

Through this journey, PND has always stood out as the greatest contributor to the Trust’s journey. “He had many strengths—planning & flawless execution, compassion, and was an embodiment of giving—but the first of these that comes to mind was his openness to learning and sharing the knowledge learnt,” says MSDS Trustee, Latha Suresh. “He was an avid reader and would apply the knowledge gained from the books he read immediately. I remember him marking the important lines and pages and asking me to read them or to document it.” But that was not all. “His non-judgemental attitude and desire to find a good quality in every individual motivated his team to revere him.” Latha also recalls PND’s incredible memory: “He never forgot a single person with whom he worked or interacted, irrespective of whether it was a staff or the head of an organization. His empathetic nature, always made him say something to whomever he interacted with and they would never forget him or his observations. All these strengths aside, perhaps the greatest legacy that PND has left the MSDS Trust with is in Latha’s words, “the legacy of giving”. She recalls, “Giving was in his DNA and he preached the concept of giving to one and all. ‘Giving a little of your little’ and ‘Each One Reach One’, were his mantras to promote giving.”

Over the years, MSDS Trust has won itself several laurels, and many an achievement. It began with the Dal-

Oil-Sugar (DOS) distribution scheme and Annadhanam schemes. “Over 20,000 kilograms of commodities are distributed every month to around 40 NGOs in Chennai,” says Latha. Felicitating social change agents with the Sadguru Gnanananda National Awards, and supporting budding social entrepreneurs with Sadguru Gnanananda Fellowships is also a keenly cultured initiative of MSDS. “Over 115 social change agents across India have been felicitated, seven fellows have completed their fellowship and nine are currently pursuing it,” Latha adds. Other achievements include building learning centres that promote social entrepreneurship through Centre for Social Initiative & Management (CSIM), with over 1000 people having been oriented to the concept of social entrepreneurship in CSIM centres across Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bangalore, Coimbatore, Hoshangabad and Devrukh. In all, over 200 social entrepreneurs have been groomed by CSIM. “We have also taken steps to promote the social accounting and audit process amongst social enterprises across India through Social Audit Network, India,” says Latha, “Over 75 organisations including NGOs, For-profit social enterprises, CSR projects and NBFCs have been audited by SAN, India.” Last but not the least, the Trust has also given special focus to educating the disadvantaged, educating around 25 transgenders and 20 Narikurava tribal children.

The vision for MSDS is quite clear: open 100 CSIMs and groom 1 lakh social entrepreneurs across India. “We are networking with many Colleges and Universities to start Social Enterprise Skill Labs that would offer both training on Social entrepreneurship and also enable incubation of social enterprises,” says Latha. CSIM’s goal involves reaching out to more budding social entrepreneurs and offering fellowships to at least ten a year. “The strategy is to network with corporates and make them sponsor one social entrepreneur for three years,” Latha adds. All of this will no doubt, make for a fitting tribute to PND, whose vision for social entrepreneurship has resulted in the many achievements of the MSDS Trust. We are certain that the dreams of PND will be taken forward by his brother Shri PN Subramanian (PNS).

# Social Audit Network (SAN) Annual Gathering



The Social Audit Network, UK's Annual Gathering was held on 20th October 2017 at Women's Organisation in Liverpool. The theme of the programme was "Reporting on Social Value - Good News, Fake News, and the need for Social Audit!" Around 65 participants from UK joined the gathering.

The morning looked at the basis of social accounting and audit and a number of case studies were presented which examined things that had worked well and others that were more of a challenge. There appeared to be a general consensus that regular reporting on the change that happens as a result of what a social or community enterprise does, is a good thing.

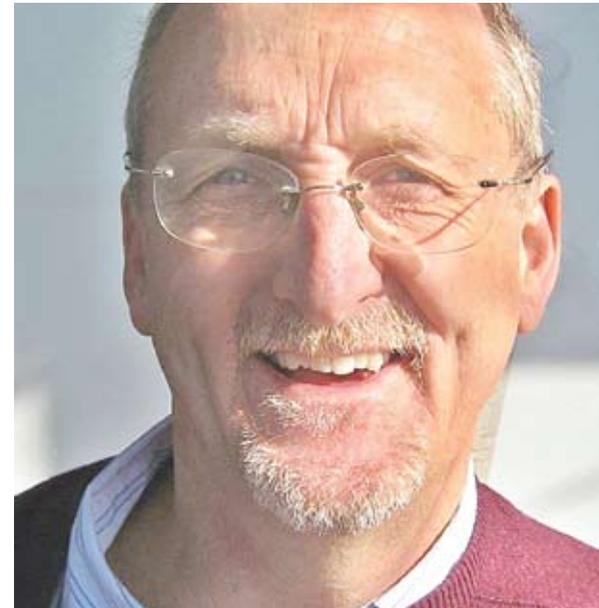
The afternoon concentrated on how to believe what is contained in social reports and on the importance of the social audit panel. This was followed by an expert panel comprising of Jeremy Nicholls of Social Value UK, Mike Thomas of Grant Thornton, Richard Cobbett of Social Enterprise Mark and Latha Suresh of SAN India. They shared the social impact methodology and frameworks followed by each organisation and answered the queries of the participants on the current trends and future of the social impact / social value domain.

The Online learning platform on Social Accounting and Audit was launched for the SAN members. This learning programme which is still in its design stage will create an online platform for SAN members across the world to film meetings, have Bulletin exchange, set assignments, Communicate between learners and also enable peer review and help.

Ms. Marie Banu from Chennai and Ms Karuna Luthar from Dubai, who are accredited SAN auditors were invited as special guests for the Gathering.



# MEASURING SOCIAL IMPACT 'IS LIKE QUICKSILVER IN THE HAND'



I was at a conference recently about the future of Volunteering where discussion arose about how to measure its impact. Representatives from volunteering organisers complained about the problem of commissioners expecting longitudinal measurement of the social impact of volunteering, when this is something that varies and changes on a day to day basis. This made me think of Dorothy Parker's quote about quicksilver. 'Leave the fingers open and it stays. Clutch it and it darts away'.

I learned that most people, especially the young, volunteer for a short period of time, or just for a one-off event. Tracking the difference that this has made for them and for society is nigh on impossible. (...and certainly would involve a huge amount of effort).

So if commissioners need to know the difference that something as ever-changing as volunteering is making, can this really be done? Should we clutch the quicksilver and try to make it fit into a box of metrics, or leave the hand open and watch it change?

The whole problem of tracking change over a long period of time is not being addressed by most social impact measurement approaches, which take a 'snap shot' or try to clutch at the truth of the impact (not always capturing the true picture and certainly not understanding it in the medium to long term...)

So I have two suggestions – one for the volunteering organisers and a follow-up for commissioners;

Organisers – look to the use of social accounting and audit, which at least tries to track social impact over time due to the regularity of the process... Use a repeated and robust measurement system as part of your daily business, and keep it there.

Commissioners – would you accept the 'passporting' of evidence about social impact, or learning from evaluation between projects if there was a robust social accounting system in place? Rather than expecting measurement in minute detail for a provider to receive payment, would you be happy if observed and assumed impact/outcomes could

be shown in the longer term through independently verified social accounts?

Dorothy Parker's original quote was about Love. I also learned that people volunteer because they care about something! Let's not put them off by stifling this caring with form-filling and over-zealous counting of what they do.

Anne Lythgoe is Manager of Policy and Partnerships at Salford City Council and is supporting a partnership between the public and VCSE sectors in the City and Greater Manchester.

More information can be found at [www.salfordsocialvalue.org.uk](http://www.salfordsocialvalue.org.uk). Anne is also a Director of the Social Audit Network. [www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk](http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk).

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



## 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](http://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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# Nruthya Bodhini – Musings of an Artiste

## 15 – Evolution, connecting to ultimate purpose

**W**hat is a successful social entrepreneurship journey? To what extent numbers, awards, accolades, reach out decide whether the journey is successful or the journey is achieved? Where is each social entrepreneur actually expecting to move and where have they moved? How come work with society is happening since the day civilization has existed and it continues to happen? What is the beginning and what is the end? What power do initiating thoughts have? Who will recognise the work of digging and planting a seed as critical work in the need to see the fruits being eaten? These are some critical questions.

There are many stages in which a change initiative gets life within a society or system. There are the conceivers, initiators, propagators, workers, maintainers and builders... sometimes different and sometimes same era depending on the extent of roots that have to be dealt with in the system. Each stage and the individuals who are part of that stage play a significant role in the process of change. The final fruit may be seen only after a long time but each stage is critical and significant.

How many social entrepreneurs and the people who work with them and for them realise the value of each stage and not get frustrated or de-motivated on the way?



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

“What are you doing?” His neighbour asked.

“Planting mango trees,” was the reply.

“Do you expect to eat mangoes from those trees?”

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

(Sampath.J.M. story 95. Discovery - 3rd edition, Insight Publishers, Bangalore, India, 1998)

Sadhana too was wondering where she was headed most evenings coming back home from work. Her masters’ degree had landed her into a HR job. She kept working trying to make sense of her career, dance, therapy with the senior citizens that continued with the dance school and solo wherever people called. She was busy 24/7 in mind and running around to complete more as though there was a target and a destination that would suddenly tell she has arrived. She wanted her PhD in next five years and she wanted to start her therapy and dance experiment centre in next two years. Every other evening she used to draw up plans and go meet people who can support her with ideas. Extensive study of the topics in psychology and connecting it to human behaviour happened till late into night. “Sadhana, I don’t understand you. What is this obsession to complete things that you are running behind? Why don’t you relax and load yourself less for the day? Spend more time with me. Life is a long road and we will not get these days back again,” even the ambitious Amma sometimes lamented after a loaded week. Those nights Sadhana questioned deeply and concluded as long as she loved all that she was doing, there should be no slowing and no stoppage to the climb she thought she was doing.

“Hey, Sadhana, I have not so nice news for you,” said the Manager one day when she arrived at the rehearsals. “The project proposal you had given to the management of the centre to begin the therapy for senior citizens is not going to happen. They have rejected it and taken up the science



programs for children this year.” The shocked Sadhana stopped and screamed, “What! The president was so encouraging and spoke to me as though it was already done last week. Why such a U turn in the decision? I have already told so many and even registered some of them for the classes from next month. How can they do this to me?” Tiny tears were forming at the edge of the eyes and the heart felt heavy, anxiety fast filling in her body. “Sorry, these are the ways of life. I am sorry I can’t help in this anymore,” said the manager giving her a small hug.

When things happen, whether good or bad they happen in a sequence. Blame it on time, horoscope or luck, it just doesn’t help. Just after two days, there was a mail from the Professor informing that the PhD application was not accepted since the Management Institution had withdrawn the collaboration with the State University. This was another shock since Sadhana had been working for almost eight months on the hope that this will come through. It meant one has to start all over again for admissions.

The mantle fell on the head when she did not get the job she wanted after her internship just because she had graduated from a State University while her competitor had a premier institute degree. Any amount of work that was done or sincerity had fallen lower in front of the university status. A social work background was considered lesser than the management degree. She decided to continue work in the Management Institute in research area and moved on to the new job.

In the next three months the hope kept diminishing and nothing seemed to be working. This had a serious effect on Sadhana’s social life too. She slowly withdrew from visiting friends, meeting her mentors, came back home early and would watch some TV and be silent. Sadhana and silence had so far never been together. She rarely went to the dance class blaming on the work load and tiredness. Amma was very disturbed to see Sadhana cocoon herself like this. There used to be a lightning, sound and energy around Sadhana all the time and now there was an eerie silence inside the artiste.

Life moved on for Sadhana; meeting

her partner, marriage and new work, new friends and new city. The artiste inside had become dormant and was lying low. A year and a half had passed.

Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over  
She became a Butterfly

*In the journey of social entrepreneurship, nothing is passed on by the Universe as waste. Every thought, every little action counts. The cocooning and introspection form one of the greatest ways in which the potency of the action can be increased multiple times. Many a time nothing may seem to have come to an end, a thing of the past. But that is when the social entrepreneur has to be most awake. It only says that the transition has to happen from the previous stage to the next stage. An act is over and a new act will begin, which will play a large part in the bigger scheme of things. A thought never dies in the Universe. It always remains in the*

*hope of growing. A social entrepreneur never waits for any acknowledgement. It is a journey and he just continues to live. True entrepreneurship journey never ends. It continues irrespective of who is working for it. It's a legacy left behind.*

So is Sadhana's story. A new story had begun with a continued thought. Sadhana in her journal made notes after nearly two years, "I see a new light. There is no climb there is no destination to reach. There is no outside accolades that says I have achieved or no real tangible awards that can prove my sincerity or worth. All this is in the living truly. True living of every day. Nothing goes waste. Nothing needs to be proven and nothing needs to be achieved. I am part of the Universe and the Universe is a part of me. When the seed is planted, I have to wait till the earth breaks and a new sapling is formed. A new form or being comes. It holds the potential of the seed but it is not the seed. It has a nature and a life of its own. Yet it carries the thought that the Universe gave. It carries the hope that the Universe holds in its womb".



"It's a girl" whispered her husband into the ears of half-conscious new mother. "My love, my little darling, I will wait to see the journey continue. You are the Universe's hope, you are the real connect between the thought and the action. You belong not to me

*but to this earth and the journey only continues. I see the hope in your shining eyes. I see I have a larger role to play in being who I can be so you will become who you can be. I will be the 'Sadhana' I always wanted to be and I will be the butterfly so that you can be more. Together we can explore the world to take the thought to newer heights of action. All the best my little one."*

*The purpose of life is to evolve. As long as the actions can make me a better individual and a better soul each day the journey is made. 'Sadhana' continues and the story evolves into the next league.*

*Thank you Ms. Bhanu, and CSTM for giving me this opportunity to pen my thoughts and weave my story for the young aspiring social entrepreneurs and the great contributions they make to leave this a better world for tomorrow.*

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath

## Credibility



Ramu, like some others in his village Musori, got addicted to eating a herb which tasted good, but was injurious to health. He would not listen even to his grandmother when told to stop the habit. So she took him to a *Swamiji* in the same village and requested him to advise Ramu. Instead the *Swamiji* asked the old lady to bring the boy back after a month.

A month later the *Swamiji* asked Ramu to abandon the habit and as he was obeyed by the whole village, Ramu gave up the habit. Now, the grandmother wondered why the *Swamiji* did not give the same advice a month back and asked him. The great man replied, "A month ago, I myself was addicted to the herb. It took me a month to give up the habit."

### Explicit Learning

- A. Practice before you preach.
- B. Our credibility improves when we practice what we preach.
- C. Those who only preach will have only listeners, not followers.

### Introspective Learning

- A. What is the nature of 'Credibility'?
- B. What gives credibility to my words - my preaching or my practicing?
- C. How do I reduce the gulf between what I say and what I do?

# “Social Entrepreneurship is applying thinking to solve problems, even if you don’t have resources.”

**Sonam Wangchuk** shares with **Marie Banu** the need for Social Entrepreneurship in India.

**S**onam Wangchuk, is a Ladakhi engineer, innovator and education reformist. He completed his B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering from National Institute of Technology, Srinagar (then REC Srinagar) in 1987.

Wangchuk is the founding-director of the Students’ Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) which was founded in 1988 by a group of students who had been in his own words, the ‘victims’ of an alien education system foisted on Ladakh. He is also known for designing the SECMOL campus that runs on solar energy and uses no fossil fuels for cooking, lighting or heating.

Wangchuk was instrumental in the launch of Operation New Hope in 1994, a collaboration of government, village communities and the civil society to bring reforms in the government school system.

In 2005, Wangchuk was appointed as a member in the National Governing Council for Elementary Education in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. From 2007-2010, he worked as an Education Advisor for MS, a Danish NGO working to support the Ministry of Education (Nepal) for education reforms. He was appointed to the Jammu and Kashmir State Board of School Education in 2013.

In late 2013, Wangchuk invented the Ice Stupa technique that creates artificial glaciers, used for storing winter water in the form of conical shaped ice heap. In 2014, he was appointed to the Expert panel for framing the J&K State Education Policy and Vision Document.

Since 2015, Wangchuk has started working on establishing Himalayan Institute of Alternatives. He is concerned about how most of the Universities, especially those in the mountains have become irrelevant to realities of life.

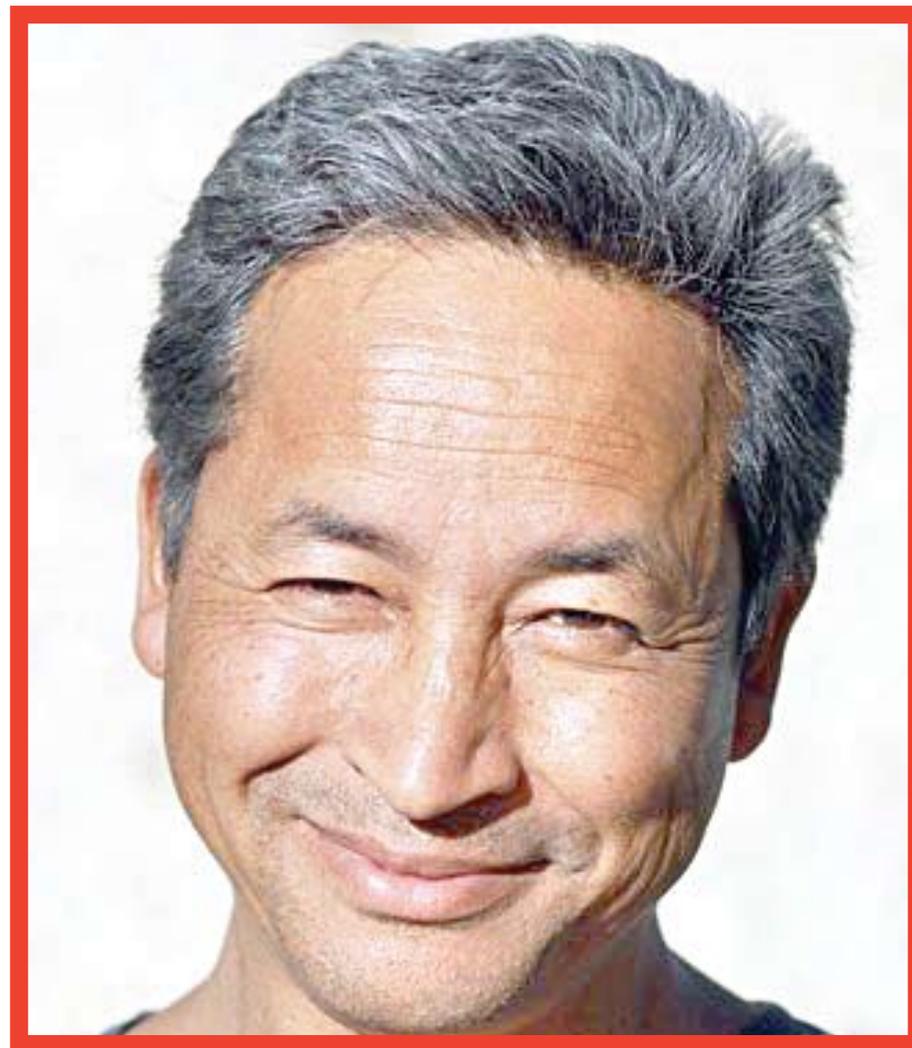
In 2016, he initiated a project called FarmStays Ladakh, which provides tourists to stay with local families of Ladakh, run by mothers and middle-aged women.

Wangchuk has been honoured with the prestigious Rolex Award for Enterprise 2016.

*In an exclusive interview, Sonam Wangchuk shares with Marie Banu the need for Social Entrepreneurship in India.*

**Known as the ‘The Real Phunsuk Wangdu of Ladakh’, who has been your inspiration to advocate for alternative learning?**

I spent my childhood in a very tiny village without schools, till I was about nine years old. I learnt, although I did not go to school; in fact in a better way than normal conventional school goes. This made me think of different ways one can learn which



does not have to be just memorising ‘A for Apple and B for Ball’ type of learning. The childhood which I spent with plants, animals, mountains, water and rivers, helped me learn much.

**About Ice- Stupas and your experience?**

In January 2014, I started the Ice Stupa Project. My aim was to find a solution to the water crisis that were faced by our Ladakh farmers during the months of April and May each year. This is the time when the natural glaciers melt and waters start flowing.

I wanted to freeze glacial water in a way that it melts gradually in spring and be available to villagers when they need it the most.

I was inspired by the experimental work of a fellow Ladakhi engineer, 80-year-old Aba Chewang Norphel. It was an eureka moment when I was driving past a bridge over a stream in Phey and saw a big chunk of ice under the bridge. It was during the month of May and at 3,000 metres, the lowest altitude, it was the warmest place in the whole area. It was then I thought — we can keep the ice right here in Phey if we

protect it from the sun. This made me develop a design and make the ice stupas work. By end February 2014, I successfully built a two-story prototype of an ice stupa which could store roughly 150,000 litres of winter stream water, but nobody wanted it.

In 2015, when Ladakh faced a crisis due to a landslide that blocked the Phugtal river in Zaskar and formed a 15 kilometer long lake, it became a huge threat for the downstream population. I proposed a siphon technique to drain the lake safely instead of blasting it, but my advice was not taken. On 7th May 2015, the lake burst into a flash flood destroying 12 bridges and many fields.

Later, in 2016, I applied the Ice Stupa technique for disaster mitigation at high altitude glacier lakes. The Government of Sikkim invited me to apply the siphon technique for a lake in their State which was in a dangerous condition.

In September 2016, I led a three-week expedition to the Lhonak Glacial Lake in North-West Sikkim, which had been declared dangerous for the last few years. My team camped in tents for two weeks at the lake amidst rain and snow, installing the

first phase of a siphoning system to drain the lake to a safer level until other measures were taken up.

In late 2016, the idea started gaining traction from the authorities in the Swiss Alps. I was invited by The President of Pontresina, a municipality in the Engadine valley, Switzerland to build Ice Stupas to add to their winter tourism attractions. In October 2016, I went to the Swiss Alps along with my team and started building the first Ice Stupa of Europe together with the Swiss partners.

Over the last two decades, our work has received ample recognition and awards have come our way.

**What are the programmes offered by Himalayan Institute of Alternatives?**

Himalayan Institute of Alternatives engages youth from multiple Himalayan countries in Research & Development to tackle the issues faced by mountain people, especially in the domains of education, culture, and the environment. Like SECMOL, the university aims to break the rigid boxes of conventional thinking, be relevant to people’s lives, and encourage learning via practical application of knowledge.

As the theme is mountain development, our programmes focuses on mountain environmental studies, sustainable tourism, architecture, sustainable habitats, and so on.

**What are the issues faced by locals in Ladakh?**

The mountain communities, especially the trans-Himalayan communities have very little to gain from new technologies or studies being done. Therefore, we do not find solutions from conventional systems.

Climate change, glaciers melting, biodiversity being affected, natural disasters like flash floods and earthquake, avalanches, landslides, etc. are facts of life and there is a need for more education and disaster preparation. This is a solvable challenge!

**The need for the Social Entrepreneurship in India?**

Our country has many challenges and therefore there is a need for solutions that are innovative, one that uses more minds and thoughts than money.

You can make up for the loss of resources and wealth with the use of creative ingenuity and that is what Social Entrepreneurship is all about. Social Entrepreneurship is applying thinking to solve problems, even if you don’t have resources. That is how my solutions have been—using idea as resources.