

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

"Humility is the only true wisdom by which we prepare our minds for all the possible changes of life." – George Arliss

The world will change as a result of this pandemic. This current uncertainty has been incredibly humbling, which may be the change we much needed.

Humility is the dividing line between confidence and arrogance. It allows you the ability to continue to learn from your family, peers, staff, and colleagues.

One should recognise the fact that every human has his/her weaknesses and should be open to seek guidance and counsel from those who have more experience. Each of us should develop intellectual humility, the characteristic that allows for admission of wrongness. To acquire this trait, we need to accept the fact that our minds are more imperfect and imprecise than we would often like to admit.

Even when we identify our mistakes, we need to remember we won't necessarily be punished for saying, "I was wrong." And we need to be braver about saying it. We need a culture that celebrates those words.

Arrogance and confidence are often used synonymously, but they mean totally different and give opposite results. While confidence is gained through humble learned experiences, arrogance develops through an over-inflated ego and sense of self-worth.

We have heard of many arrogant leaders who were successful and you may wonder how they could succeed. But, do you know that most of them are all quickly forgotten?

True leadership is built on the foundation of cultivating relationships, pulling people together, and inspiring them to succeed. A confident leader enjoys the achievements of his/her staff more than his/her own accolades.

Confidence is getting the job done; arrogance is boasting about it. To be an able leader, you must be confident in your ability to make critical decisions and interact well with others and be knowledgeable in your area of expertise.

As a leader, your greatest assets should be in building a successful team. A confident leader can build a team as quickly as an arrogant leader can destroy it. Taking credit for others' work, making yourself the center of attention, and not recognizing and rewarding your staff will produce a counter-productive environment.

The COVID9 pandemic has brought out the best in many people. We have seen our neighbourhood reaching out to each other and several organisations extending their support to those in need.

We need to use this time to become more human and humbler.

Marie Banu

EDITORIAL

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

CREATING INNOVATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE NON-PROFIT ENTERPRISE - 4T MODEL

Social entrepreneurship is the work of a social entrepreneur. A social entrepreneur is someone who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change. Whereas business entrepreneurs typically measure performance in profit and return, social entrepreneurs assess their success in terms of the impact they have on society. Social entrepreneurs introduce fundamental changes in bringing about social transformation. Their personality traits ensure that social change is not administered as relief measures but as interventions where the beneficiaries become partners. Social entrepreneurs also ensure that their organizations strike collaborative partnerships with donors and philanthropists. They grow beyond the emotional element of the social cause and ensure that business-like discipline, credibility and governance is reflected in their organization.

I have a simple model which is applicable to all socially conscious individuals who can evolve as social entrepreneurs if they have the mindset to become one. It is called the 4T Model.

Opportunity to demonstrate entrepreneurship in the social sector brings talent to the social sector. Talent determines innovation. Innovation is important because, the approach in addressing a social cause determines the sustainability of the organization. Innovation only will draw the stakeholders towards supporting the cause and the work. Innovation in the nonprofit sector comprise -

- Solutions that correct root cause
- Creativity in tapping resources and networks (social capital)
- Competitive approach, that justify use of precious and scarce resources
- Scalability of solutions-depth of impact
- Replicability of solutions-breadth of impact
- Collaborative approaches
- Financial self



- sufficiency
- Empowering "beneficiaries" and making them customers
- Pursuing new opportunities and developing new models

Another driving force for any venture is resources.

Treasure signifies resources accessible to non-profits. Non-profits have access to tangible and intangible treasure.

Tangible treasure refers to the capacity of the nonprofit to generate funding and ensuring financial sustainability with a stable source of funding. The intangible aspect brings forth the nonprofit's strength in organizational capacity and access to a supportive and secure resource "giving" environment. This element refers to Venture Philanthropy and Donor Centeredness.

Time is a key driver in determining sustainability of an NPO.

Social entrepreneurs with proactive response and by committing time frequently and regularly ensure that social causes get appropriate attention of resource providers. They also develop collaborative partnerships with the community so as to deliver social change in time. Time determines sustainability because timely attention to the social cause begets the trust of donors, thus bringing financial security. Time is also an invaluable treasure when it is received by an NPO as

volunteer participation. Since NPOs cannot constitute large staff capacity, dependence on volunteer time is necessary. NPOs must ensure that they use volunteer time productively by utilizing their strengths for the benefit of the organization.

Getting involved with the social cause with love, compassion and passion, social entrepreneurs bring powerful ideas and robust models. This personal touch transforms into able leadership. This touch is transmitted in the entire organization tuning the staff to bring their best. High touch operates with talent, treasure and time. With talent, able leadership brings good human resources, succession planning, knowledge and wisdom. Touch with treasure brings commitment from social investors/donors as they see the personal drive of the leader in making a difference. With time, touch determines sensitivity towards a social cause thereby ensuring timely action.

Thus, the recipe for sustainability for Social entrepreneurs is when talent, treasure, time and touch are introduced by innovative means. Introduce the 4T model into all your social interventions and you would realize that it helps in bringing about the powerful social change you visualize.

PN Devarajan
Founder - CSIM

FARM LIVES

Love for nature and passion for farming together have inspired individuals from different walks of life to venture into organic farming. They all look up to mentors who have demonstrated that nature and its cyclic systems are more efficient in adapting to modern requirements. "All we need to give them is space, some room for thought, introspection and execution. Nature finds its way. We only have to overcome the obstacles," says Mr Manna Egambaram, who takes pride in being known as the son of a farmer.

Born in Senji, Villupuram, Egambaram grew watching his father struggling with farm loans and low crop yields. Farmer suicides, on the other hand, bothered him much as most of the adults who lost their lives were farmers he knew well. "Why is agriculture, the profession closest to nature, unpredictable and unsustainable? Where are things going wrong? Why do farmers give up?" he wondered.

Egambaram dropped out of College not only due to the dis-interest he had in city life, but for the reason that he was in love with farming and wanted to pursue agriculture. "My heart is here, in our farms. I was associated with Nammazhvar's 'Uyir Suzhal Naduvom Trust'. The 16 years I spent with this renowned organic farming champion not only inspired me, but also made me realise the magnitude of responsibility I was going to handle very soon," he adds.

He was trained by Nammazhvar in organic farming and now he is into training many farmers across different states in India in this farming technique. Egambaram engages in building model farms through participatory learning signifying his approach, which is relatable and reliable. He adopts Participation Learning and Action methods to explore local herbs and materials to prepare plant and soil tonics, pest repellants, and food for microorganisms in the soil. Egambaram has also worked with Government departments to promote organic farming among farmers in the State. Under his leadership, his team curated the practical training module for the course on Rural Development Science in Arulanandar Arts College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

As Egambaram grew popular, his work in the farms of noted civil servants recognised the leader in him and soon

he began to teach organic farming to be as a way of life.

During his early years as an organic farmer, he learnt about CSIM from a friend and is still glad that he made the decision to join CSIM. "I dropped out of Polytechnic because I wanted to live as a farmer. I consciously tried to disconnect from city life as I had my own faulty assumptions. CSIM taught me how cities and villages constituted a whole. I began to see the city village interface for what it is and the opportunity it promised for farmers like me. I learnt to see the goodness on all sides and this inspired me to explore farming from a local perspective. I now proudly advocate locally made farm materials fertilizers and pest repellants. I learnt how to promote cultivation of traditional crop varieties," shares Egambaram, quickly adding that CSIM helped him understand marketing from a social perspective.

An important aspect of Egambaram's trainings is the intergenerational workshops in community halls where age-old, sustainable land and water use systems are discussed. Facilitating the same, he feels it is important for farmers also to evolve organically. Soon, he helped trainees focus on local crop varieties that had interesting

"CSIM helped me to understand marketing from a social perspective."

characteristics. For example, Tahabrikshan is a rice variety from Manipur that helps in treating cancer. He cultivated this crop in his farms and also taught the technicalities to 80 other farmers. "That is how the chain grows," he says. Sandikar, is another variety native to Ramanathapuram district in Tamil Nadu that helps build immunity

and can grow in dry, drought prone areas. "Traditional crops also give more pasture for farm animals. They personify co-existence. There is a lot about tolerance and adaptation that we can learn from plants. All we need are the eyes to see them," says Egambaram.

Egambaram's passion and work not only inspires other farmers but compels one to question why organic farming is not the common norm. He assures that organic farming will be our future and he will do everything possible in his capacity to make this transition smooth and worthy.

Terrace and kitchen gardens administered by women and children is an incredible testimony to this transition already in place. Compost pits that recycle wet waste from kitchen not only give manure but also show the value of reducing waste. His movement 'Pasumai Iyarkai Vivasaya Iyakkam' has been demonstrating the strength behind cultivation of native crops through organic methods using local materials on his 34-acres farm. "The idea is to show how everything in nature is cyclic and an embodiment of interdependence. We must respect the requirements of plants and fields. Once this mutual bond is in place there will not be any exploitation of resources from any side. Good health is plant and soil's right too," he insists.

Shanmuga Priya. T

CHANGING HUES: Awaken the Queen within

Accede, Adapt & Ascent hallmark

Ringgggg... the doorbell rang. Manju came running and opened the door. There stood a smart woman in her mid-40s, dressed in a saree wearing large sunglasses. "Is Padma at home?" Manju ran to the family room looking for Padma, "Akka, there is someone at the door asking for you. She looks very stylish and beautiful." Padma smiled and walked to the door to see who was dropping in on a Sunday morning. "Hi, Padma, how are you?" Kavya walked into the house and hugged the surprised Padma. The smell of a familiar perfume, and long-haired lady, Padma immediately recognized Kavya, her college friend. "Kavya, what a surprise! It's been so long since we caught up! This is a pleasant surprise! Come in." Manju, who saw the joy in the greeting, knew that these long lost friends had a lot to catch up with.

Kavya removed her glasses, and the face revealed the lines and darkness under the eyes that showed she had lived a tough life. Her few strands of greying hair added wisdom to that face. Her eyes and her face smiled, revealing the warmth and happiness she had meeting Padma after a long time. "Sit down, Kavya. Where are you coming from? I thought you had settled in the estates among the hills. God! It's been nearly 20 years since we met, isn't it? The last time you came home was after your wedding, late at night, on the way to your estate." Kavya gave a deep smile remembering those days, and also a streak of pain fleetingly passed thinking of that day. "Yes, Padma that was the day we left from here and drove to the estate, and my life has been a roller coaster ride. I have been thinking of you and reading about your achievements, but never took the effort of coming and meeting you. I met our sociology teacher yesterday at the mall, and she told me that you were living in the same house. I decided I will meet you and only then leave Bangalore this time. Ah! I think I made the right decision. It feels just like old times, you and your warm hugs."

Padma knew Kavya's life had been very different from her own. But she did not want to bring it up with Kavya before lunch. They both chatted and reminisced about the old days, catching up on gossip about the girls who studied with them. After a good Sunday lunch, both of them huddled up on the couch. Holding Kavya's hand, Padma asked her, "Tell me, Kavya, where did we get lost from each other? Why didn't you answer my calls after you went back? I tried to reach you and spoke to your brothers too, but we could never meet and drifted apart. How are you? What's going on?"

Kavya, with a heavy sigh, slowly began weaving words to the myriad of emotions passing through her. "Padma, you know I was once like you - bright, smart, popular, and studious in college. We have done so many activities, from cultural events to conferences during our post-graduation. But before I could finish my exam, my mom was on her death bed with cancer. Her only dream was to see me married. My two brothers and Dad also agreed, and I had no time to think or have an opinion. I was married to my relative, a large family and my husband had four siblings. It all happened in a month, and after the wedding, in two months, mom passed away. Though she must have been happy

thinking that I was settled and taken care of, my life after that was most unsettled. We moved to the estates, where my husband worked

spoken to your father and brothers. They could have helped you in communicating with your in-laws." Kavya gave a wry smile. "It didn't work that way.

Getting a daughter married is considered completing the job, and after that, it's her duty to take care of her new family. Saying anything to them or coming back home is seen as a complaint, trouble, and potential strain in the relationship. So, it is not entertained at all. Even today, I see traces of these in households, Padma. My father, after my mother's demise and my marriage, became a recluse. My brothers were quickly married off. The second one went to settle in Australia with his bride. I had literally no one to talk to. My self-esteem had taken a dip, and I was frequently chided for being bad at household chores and cooking. I had a lot to learn, and the house was full of people. I don't know how time passed. I would be physically tired every day and fell asleep as soon as I hit the bed. Five years flew by, and I had two children. By then I had numbed myself entirely to my inner reality and went about like a robot. Of course, I was praised for my capacity to learn and manage the household single-handedly, but everyone was oblivious to my inner self, dreams, and desires. I was filled with money and material, but not the life I ever wanted for myself.

Maybe twice a year, I spoke to Bharati, our classmate, and got to know about you. Padma, can you believe that in 15 years, I had lost my sense of identity and self-esteem to reach out to any of you. I felt like you had all grown in your careers, achieving great things globally, and I grew tinier in my own head. That is why I did not connect with you whenever I came to Bangalore each year for a couple of weeks to stay with my father and brother."

Padma and Kavya had teared up, and Padma gave her a hug. Holding her hand, Padma gently whispered, "Tell me more, what changed you now, and where are you in life?"

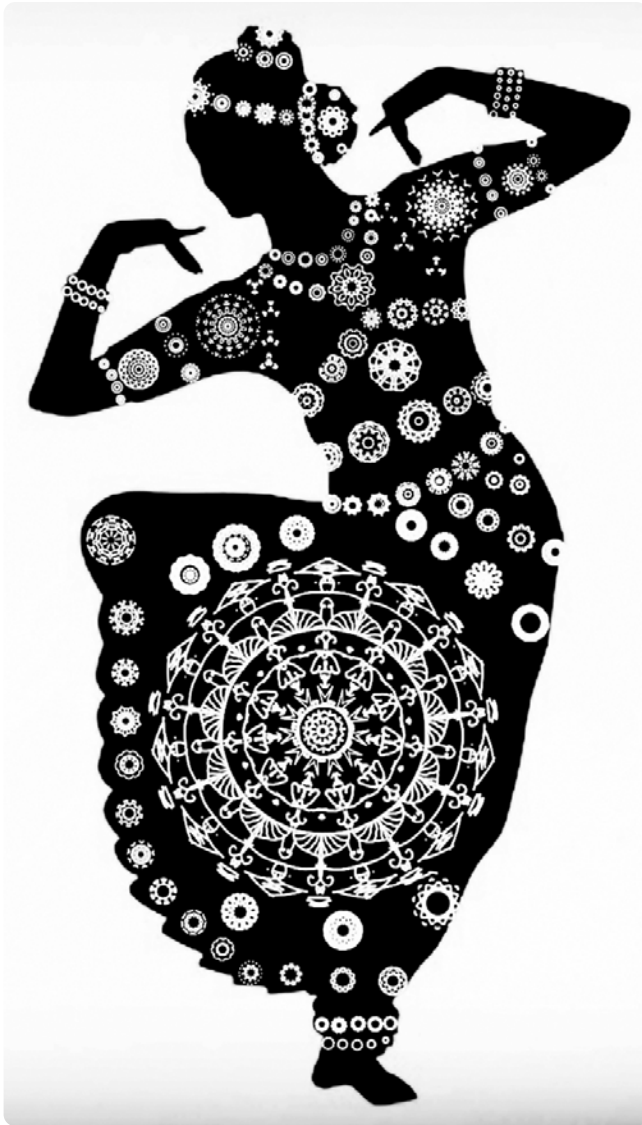
Kavya, "Padma, my life is like a film with an interval. Did you know that my husband had a stroke and a heart attack ten years back? He was confined to the bed all of a sudden. I was stunned and woken up from my zombie state. Initially, I trusted the men in the house and the estate supervisors, but soon to my dismay, I realized we were side-lined and fed lies about financial transactions. The education I have had, the confidence, and the basic capacity to take on leadership roles were dormant, but not destroyed. I rose up to the occasion. I began attending office in my husband's place which was unheard of in their family. The main resistance came from my other co-sisters and sisters-in-law. I realized the emancipation and empowerment doesn't happen with one. It has to be a complete turnaround; remember, it is like an OD exercise beginning at root level," laughed Kavya. Her moist eyes had brightened up, and with a newfound confidence, she walked back the memory lane.

"Padma, I had many difficult days thinking, "why was I born? What is the use of my study? Should I be

along with his father and brother. I had landed in a large, influential household, with four other younger siblings at home, my mom-in-law who was eternally a timid person chained to several beliefs and gender roles in her mind. I actually wanted to work. I tried to express my desire to my husband, who was very clear that women should work only when there is a financial need. Work at home is divine, and there was already plenty to do from dawn to dusk. It would be disrespectful if he sent me to work, both for the family and the community they lived in. I wasn't allowed to help out with estate administration too. I had so many sleepless nights filled with anguish and frustration in the first few years of my life with them."

Padma intervened, "But Kavya, you could have





satisfied in just running a household? Have I really done justice to being married into a highly influential family? And many more. I decided to become alive to every lady in the house, their talents, and childhood dreams. I realized all of them had something they could do but have discarded in the name of running the household.

I slowly began making a pathway for each of those, an art studio, a Montessori school, Ikebana workshops, and land to grow flowers of different varieties, a computer centre, and so on. I began huddle sessions at home every two weeks. I brought some self-growth books and read stories for them on positive thinking. They began to find their voices, and the teenagers helped me in counselling and encouraging their mothers. Seeing, this I started taking my women estate workers into my wing. I began to pay attention to their facilities available at the estate, educating them on their financial management, parenting, health, and hygiene sessions. I went through management courses online and picked up the techniques. I had to make the workers trust me, see me in my new avatar, and accept me as their leader. It took over 5 to 6 years before seeing signs of them relating to me as their leader and giving some importance to my decisions and opinions. Now we have won several awards, I have established self-help groups, I have a say in the estate owners association's governance as their President. My daughter works as a chartered accountant. My son is getting married to an architect. I have ensured other children are professionals of their own choice. Instead of being bitter, I have done what is best using all my capabilities. The estate has expanded, and some reforms have got recognition and awards too."

Padma said, giving Kavya a tight hug, "I am very proud of you, Kavya, the way you have grown yourself and others too. Lots to learn from you. You have inspired me. Nothing is late in life as long as we pick up the threads. Women can do much, and much more if they believe in themselves.

*Dr. Kalpana Sampath
Illustration by Deepthi Narayan*



Reflect:

- *Am I passive or active in life to the happenings around me?*
- *Do I know what I am using my capabilities in life for?*

Consideration



Diogenes was standing at a street corner one day, laughing like a man out of his mind.

"What are you laughing about?" a passerby asked.

"Do you see that stone in the middle of the street? Ever since I got here this morning ten people have stumbled on it and cursed it. But not one of them took the trouble to remove it so that others would not stumble."

Explicit Learning

- If you stumble, don't let others stumble.
- Let us have concern for our fellow human beings.
- Even in our pain, let us if possible, avoid pain to others.

Introspective Learning

- What prevents me from removing the stone?
- Do I really care for my fellow human beings?
- Why does my pain at times blind me to others' pain?

TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE



Education is one of the important parts of a child's life to live with happiness and prosperity since it empowers minds that conceive good thoughts and ideas

Not unlike most other NGOs, Sarthak Prayas started in 2003 with the aim of uplifting the underprivileged. Over the course of time, the organization's focus and priorities have evolved and changed with the times. Today, Sarthak Prayas is focused on building a network of blood donors, has prioritized providing quality education to children from slums, shelter the abandoned and care for the environment.

"It has been our plan and part of our mission to build the largest human chain of voluntary blood donors who are ready to donate blood in emergency," says Harsh Arora, Founder, Sarthak Prayas, "Our mission is that

nobody should die because of shortage of blood. To provide good-quality education to slum kids and build their foundation strong has been another pillar of our mission since we wish to make these children on par with current learning standard with good moral values, personality and education."

Providing a safe and secure home to needy and abandoned senior citizens and spreading awareness about environment education and ensuring protection of environment through plantation activities have been other activities that Sarthak Prayas has embarked on.

"We have kick-started the distribution of monthly ration to more than 1,000 senior citizens up until date

and have extended this to more than 5,000 families during the pandemic," says Harsh, "Running a free home for the aged in the last five years has also created a positive impact in the lives of our elderly."

Through all these initiatives, it's the organization's Blood-Donation campaign that has truly stood out as its most significant work, yet. "We receive approximate 200 calls every month for blood help from needy patients & hospitals," says Harsh, "For the last 17 years we have impacted more than 40,000 people in need of blood."

While education has also been a key activity at Sarthak Prayas, the fact that Sarthak Prayas has created a difference in the lives of over 2,000 children by providing quality education to them, is worthy of mention. The NGO is now contemplating prospects of expansion across the country, especially in line with its mission to build a network of blood donors and expand its presence of homes for the aged. "Our mission is to create the largest human chain of emergency blood donors in India and open a hundred centers for remedial education and ten homes for the aged in North India by 2023," says Harsh. Up until date, the organization has helped over 100 elderly people in need of shelter.

According to its website, Sarthak Prayas runs remedial education centers where students from government schools attend classes every day to improve their knowledge. They also impart life skills and teach them how to deal with real life situations. The organization runs many centers in Delhi/NCR with 40 students studying in each center. Since the children are from an impoverished background, the organization also supplements their nutrition with packed food every day after the class. In addition to this, as part of recreation for the children, the centers also celebrate children's birthdays every month. During the celebrations, children cut cake and the teachers distribute gifts. Each day students attend sessions for approximately 90 minutes. "As per the RTE act of Govt, no child will fail till Class eight. Most of these students are first-generation learners, with their parents struggling for their daily meals and are mostly uneducated," says Harsh, "Remedial Education builds their foundation, provide moral values, hygiene, personality classes along with basic education for their overall growth and development. This will further help in reducing the drop-out rate from government schools in long term."

Sarthak Prayas has acknowledged that education is one of the important parts of a child's life to live with happiness and prosperity since it empowers minds that conceive good thoughts and ideas. It helps students to analyse and take life decisions.

The organization concedes that the quality of education has decreased in some schools over time. Hence, the need to empower those children who are still getting education from these institutes and are from economically backward class is more relevant now than ever before. In line with this requirement, the NGO has launched its 'Build A Foundation' programme towards the improvement of education.

Sarthak Prayas began this mission by imparting education to less-fortunate children of Class two to class five, from urban slums around NCR. The organization teaches students who are already a part of government schools, and provides them life education skills, situational skills, moral values, hygiene and personality development. The organization gives children the opportunity to enhance awareness, creativity and confidence.

As far as goals are concerned, Sarthak Prayas has its priorities ironed out: "To create largest Human Chain of emergency blood donors in India, open a hundred remedial education Centres across north India, and have our own place to open and run 10 Old Age Homes in North India," says Harsh.

With its priorities and goals clearly defined, there's no second-guessing that Sarthak Prayas has its future charted out and will only go from strength to strength towards achieving what it has set out to do.



Our mission is to create the largest human chain of emergency blood donors in India and open a hundred centers for remedial education and ten homes for the aged in North India by 2023

A CULTURAL SPACE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS? HIT PLAY

At Dibashram, the day's toil falls away, and poets and musicians emerge.



Dibashram is a cultural space for migrant workers set up by newspaper editor AKM Mohsin, who saw a need for workers to express themselves through art forms like poetry, plays and music.

Six, sometimes seven days a week, Somon Mohammad labours away as a construction worker.

Once a week however, the Bangladesh native heads up a narrow flight of stairs in a Little India shophouse, and enters a room filled with the sound of musical instruments being tuned, and snatches of poetry being recited.

When Somon raises his flute, the weight of his day, for a moment, falls away. “I practice my music, I write poems, I write songs. My mind is on the music, I don’t think of other things,” he says.

Such is the spell of Dibashram. For migrant workers, who typically arrive heavily in debt in exchange for the chance to take on low-wage jobs in Singapore, Dibashram is a welcome relief that allows them to express their thoughts and feelings through the arts.

The space was set up by AKM Mohsin, who publishes *Banglar Kantha*, a Bengali newspaper with circulation in Singapore and Malaysia.

“Human beings are not machines that work every day. They need a day off, they need space to relax, play their music, discuss their literature, exchange their views, exchange their culture, meet each other,” says Mohsin. “This inspired me to make a space for them.”

Also hailing from Bangladesh, Mohsin arrived in Singapore in 1991 to study. His connection to migrant workers began by helping those who

did not speak English write addresses on the envelopes of the letters they sent home.

When workers encountered problems with their employers, Mohsin would help them communicate with local authorities.

Later, he started *Banglar Kantha* to help the Bengali-speaking community stay informed, and provided a platform for them to be heard. “They don’t speak English properly, so *Banglar Kantha* is a platform that they come and write in Bengali, tell their problems.”

This evolved into Dibashram, a place where *Banglar Kantha* contributors could gather, as could anyone who

wished to practise music and other literary arts.

“Some of them, if Sunday there is no work, they come and stay, sleep here. They feel that they’ve come home,” says Mohsin, now a Singapore permanent resident.

As a result of Dibashram, the Bengali-speaking migrant worker community has nudged a shift in how migrant workers are perceived.

In 2014, Dibashram inspired the Migrant Worker Poetry Competition, with Singaporean poets Alvin Pang and Kirpal Singh roped in as judges. Since then, Mohsin has worked with local academics on various books and

publications, while poets and musicians who used his space have gone on to participate in cultural events. Each year, Mohsin also publishes a volume of poems by his poets for sale.

Dibashram’s success is not without its hiccups — dwindling circulation of *Banglar Kantha* has affected advertising revenues, and by extension, funding for Dibashram’s expenses. Past fundraising efforts have kept it open, but Mohsin has had to shift to a smaller space to manage costs.

Still, he continues to dig deep into his resources to keep Dibashram open, and remains steadfast in advocating for better employment policies in Singapore.

To some, low-wage migrant workers are “inferior” and “not human beings”, says Mohsin. “At least we change their [locals’] mindset. Migrant workers are not only labourers, they can write stories, they can write poems, play their music, like other people in our society,” he says.

This International Migrants Day, we honour the contributions, sacrifices and rights of low-wage migrant workers as they toil behind the scenes. Explore more of their stories here, and find out how you can support the dedicated communities giving back to them.



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

BUILDING UP ABILITIES

According to a 2018 survey by the National Statistical Office (a wing of the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, GOI), currently 2.2% of India's population are disabled. This demographic is usually the worst affected in terms of access to education, access to early intervention, job-opportunities and general quality of life. In rural areas these challenges are even more amplified. This is a very diverse population with needs differing based on the minute specifics of their medical conditions, geographic location and a few other factors as well. Given these challenges, there are few organizations that have built up the necessary strengths, in terms of training, education and infrastructure, to provide holistic programs for persons with disability. Today we explore one such organization- Uma Educational and Technical Society (UETS) India.

UETS, based in the East Godavari District (Kakinada), Andhra Pradesh, was founded in 1988, with the mission to provide a barrier-free and comprehensive rehabilitation for persons with disabilities and their families. Mr. S.P. Reddy, the founder and Executive Director of UETS says that he had felt the need to serve people with disabilities, developmental disabilities in particular, since his childhood. "I had struggled a lot myself during my childhood," he says, "I had to travel a distance of 6 kms to the nearest school every day. However, I distinctly remember a mentally retarded girl in my neighborhood, who was routinely ill-treated by her family who was unable to get her proper medical care. This left a lasting impression on me. In my youth, I was so inspired by the Quotes of Swamy Vivekananda that I decided to serve this marginal section of society in any way I could."

Armed with a Post-graduate degree in Rehabilitation Psychology, Mr. Reddy launched UETS along with 'Uma Manovikasa Kendram', a residential school for children with intellectual disabilities. Having started it with just nine children, he has since developed the organization into something of a multi-disciplinary behemoth that covers a wide variety of PWD needs all over the East Godavari District, some other regions of Andhra, as well as a couple of union territories. There is a special school for children with intellectual disabilities in Kakinada with a sub-center for early intervention in L.B.Nagar, Kakinada. There are also a few different early intervention and day-care centres.

UETS runs a workshop for the fabrication and fittings of appliances and aids, a group home named 'GHARAUNDA', a deaf-blind centre, a special education training centre, and a community-based rehabilitation project. Aside from this, UETS also



runs a project for the Integration of the Child Protection Scheme in Yanam in collaboration with Childline 1098, and a Target HIV/AIDS Intervention Project for Migrant Communities in the East Godavari District.

UETS provides vocational training for disabled youth to help them gain access to jobs. Their two-year diploma programs in Special Education (with different specialisations) are recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India. UETS is also a recognized study centre for Bachelor of Special Education (Mental Retardation) - a distance learning program offered by the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad.

UETS has received several accolades over the years, gaining national and international recognition for its work. It is sustained by the support of State and Central governments, leading philanthropists, grants, and income generation programs.

Vadaparthi Veere Durga, who has moderate intellectual disability with a few behavioral issues such as hyperactivity and underdeveloped social skills, joined the residential

school in 2016. After just one year he showed significant improvement in his social skills, learning to read, write and speak, understanding others and being able to conduct many of his self-care chores such as buttoning his own shirt every day. His confidence swelled up to the extent that he now participates in all of the school's cultural events.

Another notable example is 21 year old Koteshwara Rao. Intellectually disabled, he was put through the individualised education program of UETS. He was taught personal, language, academic and pre-vocation skills. He is currently obtaining his education through the NIOS Open Schooling system. He is learning to make paper plates as well as gardening. He is also learning to handle money, to identify traffic signals and some basic computer skills. All of these will help him become independent and ready for work in the near future.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UETS has been providing relief for persons with disabilities in the form of monthly rations and financial aid. Thati Sivanarayana Dora is one such recipient. A cashew nut farmer with locomotor disability, Siva lost his job at a local nursery due to the pandemic in February this year. He says, "When UETS announced the Rs. 10,000 COVID-relief fund, I felt like it was a boon. With this money I bought a

motor, pipes, seeds and a few other things and have started agriculture in the few cents of land my family owns." This fund was jointly offered by UETS and Andheri Trust, Tiruchirappalli.

The story of Kottedevi is slightly different. A tailor and the lone breadwinner of her family, Kottedevi struggles to provide the basics for her ailing husband and her two young children. A few months ago she was diagnosed with kidney problems that forced her to stop working altogether. The pandemic made the bad situation worse. She was granted Rs. 5000 as COVID-relief fund. "For me, the one month's ration and the relief money is a god-send. Else I cannot imagine what hardships my children would have had to go through, during this difficult time," she says expressing her sincere gratitude to UETS, Kakinada and GiveIndia Foundation, Mumbai.

What are some of the challenges that UETS faces today? Says Mr. Reddy, "Currently we are having a scarcity of funds. Although we have received grants in aid from the government, there has lately been a great delay in sanctioning those funds. Additionally, wherever we have to make matching contributions, we find ourselves falling short sometimes, thus making us ineligible to avail the grants even."

However, Mr. Reddy is positive that in time, his organization will be able to make a full financial recovery and continue on their mission.

Archanaa Ramesh

FORCE FOR CHANGE

The relationship between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and socio-economic scenario exist locally, nationally and internationally. Since India is a large country, both demographically and geographically, it is difficult for the Government alone to uplift the poor and the financially unstable segment of people, and support the impoverished sections of the society.

For decades now, NGOs have contributed greatly in helping Indian communities overcoming deprivation and have access to basic necessities and rights.

Apnalaya, an NGO based out of Mumbai works with the urban poor and enables access to basic services, healthcare, education and livelihoods. The organisation focuses on ensuring provision of civic entitlements through advocacy and lobbying with the government.

Apnalaya came into existence in 1973 by Tom Holland - the then Australian Consul General in Mumbai. The organisation's aim was to create a sustainable community and tackle the problem of urban poverty. It began its operations by launching a day care facility for children of construction labourers and worked in the area of healthcare, food security, primary education and civic amenities in four different locations in Mumbai.

Apnalaya's vision is 'Empowered People – Sustainable Communities'. It works to enable people to help themselves, enhancing their capacities to demand their own rights and respond to civic and social issues through engagement with government institutions and decision-makers. Their focus is to bring about change through three verticals - Health & Disability, Education & Livelihoods and Citizenship & Advocacy.

Apnalaya adopts a multi-dimensional approach, where they work with individuals and help them gain access to basic needs and basic services (water, electricity, sanitation), healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities. The organisation works towards empowering the communities to help themselves, by imparting civic education, building a group of community volunteers, and organising people into Civic Action Groups. They also advocate with the government on key issues faced by the urban poor, and provides consultation, liaison with like-minded organisations, and creates awareness through the media for improved provision of civic amenities and services.

Between 2000-2010, most of Apnalaya's programmes that were no longer necessary were handed over to the community and other NGOs as they decided to mainly focus on development of Shivaji Nagar and M East Ward areas.

Arun Kumar, CEO of Apnalaya says, "Since its inception, Apnalaya has



worked in various areas for over 27 years. Our work was focused in Shivaji Nagar and we went from being purely an implementing organisation to one that works on research and advocacy as well. We also developed a community care approach which involved capacity building of individuals for availing basic entitlements like ration card, pan card and birth certificates."

In the recent times, Apnalaya took a call to locate the work in the larger ambit of Urban Poor in a much more pronounced way. This path was chosen to encounter the challenge and invite the urban poor to participate in their own development. It led to transforming from a needs-based NGO to an NGO that works towards helping communities become sustainable.

Many women with children quit their jobs and those who get the opportunity to work find it difficult since they have no family members to look after them. Shenaz, a young woman, got a job as a house help and had to tie her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter to the bedpost

and lock her in the house to go to work as there was no one to take care of her. Many working mothers had similar problems pertaining to jobs. When Apnalaya came to know of this situation, they started Community Childcare Centres (CCC), a unique model to empower mothers to work, while keeping their children safe during their absence and generating

opportunities for employment within the community.

Until now, 125 women have been trained to run CCCs by Apnalaya. As a result, 230 mothers like Shenaz can now leave their child in a safe place while they work. Women who run the CCCs are the eyes and ears of Apnalaya in the community. They have been trained by Apnalaya to prevent issues such as violence and abuse and identify people who are in need of medical and financial assistance.

Sharing a proud moment for Apnalaya, Arun says, "Nazreen, 16-year-old volunteer of our organisation was nominated for International Children's Peace Prize 2020! This award is presented annually to promote children's rights and better the situation of vulnerable children. She is the second girl in the last four years to be nominated for this award."

Since 2016, Apnalaya has trained around 850 grassroot leaders. The trained team members deliver the

training programme and facilitate community leaders to form Civic Action Groups, each with a local focus, engaged with their immediate community to identify issues affecting their day to day lives.

The CAGs have initiated 265 civic actions since 2017 with 216 being completed, and benefitting 13,448 families in Shivaji Nagar.

Through Apnalaya's Health & Disability programme, they also work towards improving health seeking behaviour for adolescents and adults especially pregnant and lactating women, amongst other interventions.

Shivaji Nagar was severely impacted by the lockdown. Since 24th March, Apnalaya worked hard to provide relief to the people of Shivaji Nagar and adjacent areas. In over five months of COVID-19 relief work, Apnalaya helped 2.3 lakh individuals and provided curative and preventive material support.

Signing off, Arun says, "Shivaji Nagar is directly adjacent to Deonar, Asia's oldest and second largest open landfill. They consist of relocated pavement dwellers, migrants from the rural areas struggling with poverty and unemployment, and living hand-to-mouth without basic amenities or social entitlements. Over the years, Apnalaya has managed to bring significant impact in different parts of Mumbai. Our future plans include helping out people of Shivaji Nagar in all possible ways to make it a better locality for people and focus on upliftment of the people to secure their future."

Aatika Kouser

Embracing the next new wave

With the panning of COVID across the world, the year of 2020 has destabilized many of the existing social and economic structures. The society at every level has been affected in one way or the other due to the pandemic. The vulnerabilities of our existing systems have been exposed and affected people from all strata of the community. In such moments of crisis, humanity has always come together to address and ameliorate the wounds. There has been concerted effort to build, collaborate and participate towards societal good, be it at a personal, community, organizational or at a governance level. This clarion call is here to stay in the coming future and we are sure to be transitioning into a new era.

Corporate India has risen to the COVID challenge with great agility by donating over 5,300 crore rupees to the PM Cares fund and also providing critical care products and facilities for health-workers and communities. The largest conglomerates in the country are enhancing hospital infrastructure and offering quarantining facilities; automotive manufacturers have stepped in to produce ventilators and provide ambulances, a number of fast moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) majors are supplying hand sanitizers to meet the growing demand and many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are producing masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs.) This response to the urgent needs of the country has come at a time even when corporate India is up against a deepening business and financial crisis triggered by loss of production, broken supply chains and low demand in the domestic and global markets.

Corporations are beginning to re-imagine, re-structure and re-build to adapt to the new reality and to the new normal. This change is however different from the changes society has previously witnessed. Businesses are beginning to realise that besides securing their interest, if sizeable effort and action is not taken towards inclusive growth, their own structures and businesses could be affected. Hence growth in the coming future will focus more on a blended approach of business profitability with inclusive interests.



The world has experienced a great rise in the number of entrepreneurs who have been converting their ideas into reality, while unleashing their passion and innovation to start new ventures. But parallel to this growth, intrapreneurs have also been key players in the race towards a new kind of economy. These intrapreneurs from within the organization have been propellers of growth for their organizations.

According to Gifford Pinchot III, who coined the term in 1978, intrapreneurs are “dreamers who figure how to turn an idea into a profitable reality.” They bring much-needed entrepreneurial capacity to large, systematized organizations. This thought was further popularized by Steve Jobs in a 1985 Newsweek article in which he said the Macintosh team “was what is commonly known as intrapreneurship. A group of people going, in essence, back to the garage, but in a large company”.

Companies across have understood the need and relevance of such individuals and have been initiating structures and ecosystems to nurture them. There has been a rising interest for human-centric development, design thinking and lean management. Historically, the focus has often been to look outside the organization. Corporations would buy, merge, or partner with established innovative companies to increase market

share and competitiveness as they often find it challenging to create such radical innovations in-house.

A different approach to resolve the above could be to nurture an entrepreneurial ecosystem within the organization – which is to promote Intrapreneurship. Intrapreneurship puts the people of an organization in the center and supports them in creating, developing, and scaling their existing ideas. The companies gain to benefit in more than one way as described below:

- Intrapreneurship enables a continuous stream of innovation which drives new product and service development.
- Supporting existing intrapreneurs and encouraging employees in intrapreneurial thinking and acting will lead to a growing number of high potentials retainment.
- Intrapreneurs do not operate on the well-established paths of a company. They perform at the edge, circumventing the company's comfort zone. Employees working in this kind of environment identify the blind spots – the opportunities and threats which are unseen and might otherwise be missed – and exploit them.
- A dedicated intrapreneurship strategy enables the high

performers to bring organisations to the next level.

- They are forced to operate as efficiently as possible, using the resources already available to them to achieve the best outcome possible. For a company, this behavior is more than desirable.

They are better positioned to release new products and services at accelerated speed.

The shift today is to embrace sustainability and inclusiveness along with profitability. It is here that the role of the social intrapreneur becomes increasingly important. Social intrapreneurs can serve as the bridge to creating a sustainable world through the development of innovative ideas within organization.

The millennial leaders look for more than a good salary - they're searching for significance in their day-to-day work and they tie their personal values more closely to their career than previous generations. By giving a platform to these 'social intrapreneurs' and creating an environment that incubates and promotes their initiatives, smart companies find that not only are they able to keep their most talented and highly skilled people, they are fulfilling society's growing expectations of the company's role and opening the way for new ideas, broader markets and innovative ways of doing things. This way organization will not only meet their market needs but also fulfill the unmet non-market needs of the society at large.

Keeping the above interests in mind, Centre for Social initiative and Management (CSIM) has embarked on its new journey of providing a platform for learning and networking in the space of Social Intrapreneurship. This is being offered in the form of a structured learning through its Social Intrapreneurship -101 and Advance course which will help individuals and teams to understand the nuances of Intrapreneurship as well as work on an idea of innovation or improvement for their respective organizations. The upcoming course is slated in January 2021. Interested individuals/teams may kindly write training@csim.in or call 98414 16840.

Vatsala. R



Centre for Social Initiative and Management

Contact Persons:

Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM) is a unit of Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani (MSDS). 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. 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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“I have always believed in three D’s – Determination, Dedication and Devotion.”

Smt. Srekala Bharath shares with Marie Banu her passion for Bharatanatyam

A prominent disciple of erstwhile Bharatanatyam luminary Guru K. J. Sarasa, Smt. Srekala Bharath is a passionate dancer, ingenious choreographer and an inspirational teacher. An ‘A Grade’ Doordarshan artiste, Smt. Srekala Bharath is a dedicated and vibrant Bharatanatyam exponent who has been performing in the concert circuits in India.

Her creative journey as an artiste has taken her to 32 countries for staging countless moments of her unique interpretation of the divine art of Bharatanatyam. In 1999, she established Thejas School of Performing Arts in Chennai and has presented papers on dance and its expression and innovations with relevance to contemporary time in India and overseas.

In an interview, Smt. Srekala Bharath shares with Marie Banu her passion for Bharatanatyam.

Your early years as a Bharatanatyam dancer?

Like any other family, where they would want their children to learn art, my parents Smt. Indira and Sri. C. R. Krishnamachari enrolled me in my respected Guru K. J. Sarasa’s Dance school in February 1969, which was in our neighbourhood. Thus began my *Thaiyathai Adavu* with my Guru K. J. Sarasa. It was my Guru who tapped my talent and identified my passion for Bharatanatyam, because at a young age of 7 years any child wouldn’t know whether he/she would take up this art as a profession or not. In 1971, my Guru told my parents that I am ready for Salanga Pooja. Then, I had my Arangetram on 22nd May 1972. Dance has always been my passion and prayers.

In August 1979, I got married when I was 18 years old to Sri. K. Bharath Kumar who was a South Zone opening bowler and presently a committee member of the state cricket senior selection. Also, a very good friend of my elder brother Sri. Krish Srikkanth, former captain of the Indian cricket team.

My mother-in-law, Smt. Jayakrishnan, a reputed Carnatic musician and my father-in-law Sri. M.R. Krishnan, a lawyer by profession were pillars of encouragement after my marriage. In fact my mother-in-law has accompanied on vocals for few of my early performances.

I was also selected at the Talent Promotion Concerts conducted by Tamil Nadu Eyal Isai Nataka Manram, and performed in four cities.

The awards and appreciation you hold close to your heart?

From 1986, I started getting recognitions as a dancer and my first award ‘Nadana Mamani 1995’ was conferred by Kartik Fine Arts in 1996. It

was such a lovely feeling on receiving the first award from Kartik Fine Arts, because any award and recognition is a pat on our back to do better, and our responsibility grows. From then on, I was climbing the ladder of success by the grace of God and my Guru’s blessings.

As of now, I have been to 30 countries for dance performances, out of which 11 countries were sponsored by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the rest were private tours.

In 1998, I received the coveted ‘Kalaimamani Award’ which was conferred by the Government of Tamil Nadu. So far, I have received around 32 awards, including the ‘International award of Bharata Rathnam’ from Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka; House of Commons recognition from Toronto, Canada; as well as from the World Dance Congress, Athens, Greece.

I was also conferred Senior Fellowship by the Department of Culture, Government of India and have submitted a research project on Innovations in Bharatanatyam and adapting them in dance dramas. It feels good to know that I am a Cultural Ambassador from India to spread the divine art of Bharatanatyam across the globe.

According to you, what are the key values a dancer should have?

Bharatanatyam being a divine art teaches us discipline and we also learn a lot about our Hindu mythology as all the dance items revolve around Gods and Goddesses.

I have always believed in three D’s – Determination, Dedication and Devotion. These three D’s will definitely take you far in your chosen career, especially in a performing art like Bharatanatyam. The fourth ‘D’ is destiny, which is God’s blessings. I call this as ‘luck’. As dancers, we realise God more than the singers because we get into the character. So, if we take care of all these 4 D’s, every talent will shine.

As a passionate dancer and a devoted teacher, what are your views of present day students?

When we teach children, we learn a lot. I take much pleasure in teaching and I have been telling my students that while I am a sweet aunty, I am also a very strict teacher! Despite children been given a lot of school and college work, they do find time to learn art, especially Bharatanatyam, which imbibes a culture of discipline.

I have been the summer school teacher for Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan in London which was another beautiful experience. Many children out there are talented and the way in which they admire our tradition is remarkable.

In fact, all students today adhere to



their Guru’s teachings which is a very good trend.

About Thejas - your Dance School?

I established Thejas School of Performing Arts (TSPA) in October 1999 in Chennai. As a teacher, I am committed to the exceptional development of my students enabling them to evolve as artistes while they share my creative journey at my school Thejas, and at the same time carving a niche for themselves. Through my solo and group thematic productions I am very happy that I have delved into many themes other than my margam.

I have been with my Guru for 30 years from 1969 to 1999, and with her blessings became an independent dancer and started my own Bharatanatyam school. Until now, I have trained over 425 students, some of whom are now in USA, UK, Canada and Australia.

Last year, we celebrated 20 years of Thejas and 50 years of my dancing career. On this occasion, we launched a coffee table book ‘YATRA’ the journey of my dance from 1969 to 2019 – as a Dancer, Teacher, and Choreographer.

When I decided to launch this book, I was overwhelmed by the support from my family, dancers, Gurus, colleagues, and everyone whom I got in touch with. I was moved by their love and respect to me. I feel truly blessed!

We at Thejas conducted the 11th edition of Thejas Bala Natyotsav giving dance opportunities to extremely talented classical dancers in the age group of 8 to 12 years. It was a huge success and just for 9 slots we received 140 applications online!

We have been conducting this festival since 2009 in auditoriums. This year, due to the pandemic, we had to conduct it online.

Has Bharatanatyam online classes been effective?

Apparently, I have been teaching Bharatanatyam online since 2009. I conduct classes through Skype and now through Zoom. In fact, I still have a student from Detroit, Michigan, visiting Chennai every year to perform at the Margazhi Utsav, music and dance season in the month of December. I still remember Smt. Y.G. Parthasarathy of Bharat Kalachar being impressed with our online classes. Her feedback and many such reviews were published in leading newspapers and magazines.

I am thrilled that the advancement in technology is helping us to stay through this divine art of Bharatanatyam despite the trying times of the COVID pandemic.

Is there a growing demand for Bharatanatyam in western countries?

Yes, I have received a lot of invitations from western countries. I have toured for solo as well as group dance performances to Japan, USA, Canada, South Africa, and 28 other countries.

Wherever I have gone, people have been very receptive to our dance – be it their own citizens or non-resident Indians – they will come in large numbers to witness our performances.

Let me tell you, the best ever audience is in France. Of course, France is known for their rich cultural heritage. In 2003, I performed at the Museum theatre which is beautiful and much tastefully done. The audience were seated on the aisle and I performed along with my student as *Guru-Sishya parampara*. I had a French translator as I narrated the dance items in English. The performance was for almost three hours and the audience sat through the entire show.

The way in which the French people admired our dancing, jewellery, and spoke to us after the show is memorable.