

# Conversations Today

*Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises*

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About Eureka Child Foundation and their programmes



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## From the Editor

Dear Friend,

We all subscribe to the belief that we have a right to not just pursue happiness, but to be happy. No matter how grim the past has been, people believe it can all change with the flip of the calendar. All one needs to do is: look at the bright side.

There is a story about three construction workers who were assigned the same task. A passer-by asked them what they were doing. The first person replied that he was cementing the bricks. The second person said that he was building a wall, and the third person said: "I am building a Cathedral."

In this life, attitude is almost everything. Positive feelings are the key to having a positive attitude either at home or in the workplace. The big question for many of us is: "how to keep a positive attitude in everything we do?" Well, if we want our children to develop positive thinking, we better start with ourselves. What a fabulous reason to have a positive attitude! Isn't it?

Hope the stories of hope that are featured in this publication inspire and motivate you to spread positive energies around.

Life moves on, and nothing changes by worrying. So, keep smiling and spread the cheer around.

Marie Banu

# Living Life Infused With Positive Energy

## Transitioning from Surviving to Thriving to Being

In today's busy life, every person is overwhelmed and to a great extent externalized. In the journey of living life, somehow the "inner processes" are playing very little role and the external processes are driving the change, the behaviors and the results.

Lack of inner processes and excessive dependence on external processes is leading to significant drain in energy levels. This is so because external processes use up a lot of energy. This current state of surviving is a result of an imbalance of energy levels. This downward spiral of energy needs to be reversed in order to move into a state of thriving in this world.

Thriving enables people take responsibility, thus prompting them into an 'action' mode. This helps them welcome and address challenges, without feeling victimized.

The next transition is to move into a state of Being. BEING means experiencing abundance, pausing and renewing, being energized and able to energize, being restful, being humble and grateful – living in a state of balance. This transition is captured in the Energy Rainbow.

The Being state contributes to 'new' energy and conservation of 'existing' energy. This is the essence of Positive Energy, which results in the realization that working on inner processes leads to more external successes and helps us live in a state of calm, despite raging storms around.

## Channeling Positive Energy

By inner processes the reference is to what we store in 'space', one of five elements of Nature and our Being: earth, water, fire, air, and space. This 'space' within us is not empty. Every imprint of our actions in the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimension in our lives is stored in this 'space'. It is filled with countless thoughts, emotions, our experiences of the day to day and our spirit, our capacity to energise ourselves and everything that we allow to accumulate. Depending on what is present and also getting added to this 'space', we are Surviving, Thriving or in Being state.

When we channel positive energy through rituals, we clear our 'space' and also regularly create appropriate imprints to be held in this 'space'. And such imprints also bring us in touch with the inherent goodness and vastness of this 'space', beyond our own. Such a renewal builds a virtuous cycle, feeding into rituals of all four energy dimensions-physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

## Some such rituals for channeling positive energy are described below:

**Mindfulness:** Mindfulness results in getting out of the thoughts of past or future and releasing energy for the here and now.

- **Gratitude:** Gratitude creates a sense of abundance, builds a joyful acceptance of life, develops compassion, and makes each moment of life more livable.
- **Coaching:** Coaching yields



results such as, greater self awareness, enhanced self belief, increased confidence in dealing with challenges, and greater efficiency through less fractious relationships.

- **Centering Visualization:** An energy balancing technique that helps you align what you choose to do, with how you want to feel, and what you choose to think with your essential beliefs.
- **Affirmations:** These are short and powerful statements that create reality; affirmations are a manifestation of the thought energy to bring positive results.
- **Exercising:** Working out to release the potential strength of the body.

## Benefits of Channeling Positive Energy

**For The Individual:** Channeling Positive energy makes you calm and relaxed, even under intense circumstances, accepting things that you cannot change and persisting in areas you can change, being compassionate, at peace with yourself, seeking healthy habits, and being optimistic, even when others are in doubt, thus living with gratitude and abundance. You will also be able to tap into things that most people

never even realize. However, this is a journey that is unique to every being.

**For Collectives (e.g.: family, organizations):** Channeling Positive energy enables you BE a good leader. Spreading this energy to those around you gives you a team of people with positive energy, in abundance. The positive energy in you can be contagious. You can inspire people with your positive energy and confidence, encourage others, appreciate them, and help them use their strengths, thus giving people the freedom to be creative. Collectives of such positively energized leaders and family members help propel organizations and families forward.

## About the Authors

Dr. Bhulakshmi V and Ms. Bhuvaneshwari Ravi are facilitators of the Positive Energy (PE) program for corporate professionals, leaders, and teacher leaders. They are spiritual seekers with a vision of transforming their own energy state from surviving to being. In this journey they have gathered deep insights and are continuously working towards creating a pathway for more seekers.

They have rich experience in corporate and non-profit set ups, in many professional disciplines like planning, project management, and instructional design, performance and learning solutions design, Environment, Health & Safety and training. With years of exposure to spiritual practices like yoga, reiki, and personal development interventions like coaching, the authors are working in the Organization Development and Leadership Development space.

This intervention is offered by GapSkills Learning Solutions. You can contact them at [info@gapskills.com](mailto:info@gapskills.com) to design a customized intervention for your organization or to join the PE open program - [www.gapskills.com](http://www.gapskills.com)





# Out of the box, but in the best shape

**“I was no longer among a group that ridiculed social sector initiatives, but instead discussed it extensively, clearing even an iota of doubt. CSIM showed me the direction that I was unable to identify.”**

Of late, it is almost a trend to see graduates opting for a career that is completely unrelated to their subject of study. How good that is might be a topic for introspection. Yet, the motivating factor or concern behind this decision has introduced us to many a social entrepreneur, time and again surfacing the myriad issues that need attention.

Here is a commerce graduate from Delhi University, who went on to do three years of articleship training in Chartered Accountancy, in spite of realizing that accounts was not his forte. “It was my dad’s dream. I was never interested in accounts. It is too dry,” says Mr Shantnu Tandon, Founder, Oorja Foundation. “A feeling used to always haunt me that if I become a CA and what if I need to bribe government officials to get my client’s work done or what if I need to advise my clients on unethical ways to evade taxes or manage money? Oh, it was so dreadful,” he quickly adds, his looks and voice convincing you of his strong dislike for the subject.

His repeated failures in clearing CA exams struck a chord with him. “This is not where I want to be,” he said to his father and started appearing for competitive examinations. On clearing the exam for General Insurance Corporation, he was, strangely, back to square one. “Yes, I was back to square one! Post six months of training in Chennai, I was posted with United India Assurance in Bhatinda, Punjab, as Accounts Head for Divisional Office. It was not a pleasing ambience at all,” says Shantnu.

“One year in a government department office was time enough to drive you insane, worse so when you dislike the job,” recalls Shantnu. Retired parents and being the eldest son, the pressure on him is apparent. Even after two years of unemployment, he was sure of doing something creative. “My best friend helped me enroll in a computer course at NIIT in 1991. I thoroughly enjoyed the two years here, and was amazed at the magical feeling creative thinking and arts inculcated.” After working for over two years as a Programmer with HCL, he moved to Canada. “This was time for me to have an experience of working abroad. I worked in Canada for over three years and later moved to USA and engaged in doing Consultancy for Software Development.”

“The experience in USA raised a volley of questions in my mind. I started reflecting on instances around me. On deputation for a project with GE Aircraft Engines, I was appalled to see our fellow Indians selling their self-esteem and working like sheep and goats only for a few dollars,” says he. Back in India in 1999, his job hunting landed him at Oracle University as Tech-Trainer. “I was pursuing my passion only now. I was going to do what was close to my heart—Teaching!” he adds.

Shantnu has surprises in the immediate



statements after this. Extensive travelling in the four years with Oracle drained all his energy in technology, but his interest in teaching multiplied. No, he did not quit this time, but decided to take an internal transfer to the managerial cadre. In 2003, he headed the Employee Training Division on software & soft skills, in Hyderabad and after eight years the ladder to head the Technical Training did not comfort him though.

All this while, his search for something went on without the knowledge on what it was. “Every time, the realization that this was not it, came haunting. I wanted something more meaningful. I started feeling that I’m wasting my energy trying to bring already overfed people to the dining table,” says Shantnu, who started thinking of leaving the corporate sector. His exploration began. His decision to teach in Zilla Parishad schools before office hours helped him understand the stark reality in the grassroots. Teaching children transformed his ideas. “Teaching is so different, in that, it allowed me think differently in every class. I liked it, and soon, fell in love with this process. This was it, may be. I wanted to help people devoid of opportunities due to multiple reasons,” he is bang with energy recalling this part of

his life. Shantnu understood that reality and the discussion in closed cabins were far apart, and decided to get into formal teaching in a full swing. Lack of experience made him apprehensive and his confidence levels were low.

“Thank God, CSIM happened to me at this point. It was bizarre to me at first. How can someone teach me passion? Questions and doubts arose within me. The SEOP programme in 2009 helped me tremendously. It put me along with like-minded people and this made a world of difference. I was no longer among a group that ridiculed social sector initiatives, but instead discussed it extensively, clearing even an iota of doubt. CSIM showed me the direction that I was unable to identify,” says Shantnu.

For Shantnu, Social Entrepreneurship is his best lesson from the course. “It outwits charity based model and that excited me. I could find an immediate connect with this term,” he says.

The fact that a development initiative without eyeing on profit that can be administered as a professional enterprise, with its own ways and means of sustenance gave him all the confidence he needed.

“Soon after I completed the CSIM course in September 2009, I registered OORJA FOUNDATION in Hyderabad. We are four years young now and I can proudly claim that the journey has moved on with no funds requested for,” he smiles.

Even before you ask how, he sputters his response. “Teaching is not capital intensive, so it worked.”

He did face a challenge in managing the inflow of volunteers, whose ad hoc teaching got the project’s purpose nowhere. At this juncture, he framed some basic rules for volunteers with Oorja. No casual visits were encouraged and a minimum commitment for two consecutive months was expected. Eventually, the foundation was able to host few, but very talented and passionate volunteers, who made a difference to the work in their own style. By and by, the team decided to work for providing ‘professional educational services for the children, who, for some reasons do not get access to quality education’.

“The idea behind all these efforts is to bring these kids on a level playing field, by making subjects interesting and comprehensible. The regular text books might not be adequate enough to reach the children from underprivileged communities. Our solutions are only an attempt to make sure that their love for learning is met with appropriately,” says

a modest Shantnu. Their programmes on offer are ‘English Express’ and ‘Discovery Club’ which aim at giving a strong foundation in Communicative English and analytical skills, using quizzing approach. This also provides for a smooth transition for students from local mediums. “Our investment in development of a course curriculum has now reached a stable state, from where it can be scaled up,” says he, who decided to quit Oracle in 2012 to step into full time teaching.

For Shantnu, this journey has not been easy, yet very satisfying. With no regrets for his decisions, he continues to be amazed by the difference passion and knowledge can make. While the present focus is to reach as many students as possible in the rural and urban fold through partnerships, Shantnu is very much clear about his future plan too. He wants Oorja to diversify – develop a curriculum to help illiterate people achieve functional literacy.

The word says it all – OORJA means energy. The energy of this small team is sure to make learning a much better experience for children deprived of quality education.

—Shanmuga Priya.T



# Ensuring Safety for Children

**In GOD's creation – Children are curious and fearless. They explore sans the capacity to understand danger and the adults who design or act for them do not have the thought leadership to preempt such disasters.**

**H**ow well do you think you know your Child? Listen to Dr Chetan and you will be surprised to know that we are ignorant.

It is shocking to learn that everyday around the world lives of more than 2000 families are torn apart due to loss of a child to an unintentional injury. It gets brushed aside as an "accident," but if each parent had the right awareness, they could have prevented it. The grief that the affected families suffer is immeasurable and often impacts the entire community. Such tragedy can change lives irrevocably.

Children under the age of five are at highest risk and susceptible to unintentional fatalities; major or minor injuries; or disabilities. Causality of such casualties rests with adults, who design, decide and execute the Children's world in "Adults Frame".

Yes, children live in a world designed for adults, while their body contours, reflexes and behavior is prone to injuries. In GOD's creation – Children are curious and fearless. Knowing the consequences of dangerous actions is a learnt behaviour characteristically absent in children. They explore sans the capacity to understand danger and the adults who design or act for them do not have the thought leadership to pre-empt such disasters.. Some of the characteristics of children like smaller body size, vision, hearing, and limited risk perception, makes them more susceptible to be involved in traffic crashes, burns, poisoning, drowning and others and also affects the injury outcomes.

Child safety is not in the local or global agenda. Can it be in the parents agenda then? Let us take a micro data of Bengaluru city and according to Bengaluru Injury Surveillance Programme, 5509 children were admitted with injuries, and 209 of them lost their lives in 2009-2010.

## What it means?

- Every 36 hours a child in Bengaluru succumbs to a injury related problem
- World over every minute a child loses his life to injury and accident.
- No single disease in current times is causing so much death and disability as that of Child fatality due to unintended and unsafe environment.

## Why are Children more prone for injuries ?

- Young children cannot understand danger, or that they might get hurt or even killed even when you have told them about the danger.
- They can understand "Stop" or



"no", but not the why of "Do not run onto the street because you will get hit by a car" as activity over takes caution and the absence of precedence.

- Toddlers may understand "no" but not obedience to "no".
- They have "Tunnel Vision" and hence only look at chasing a ball or running to a friend and cannot judge whether something, such as a car, is moving, or how fast it is moving and the consequence of that action

## What are common childhood injuries?

The most common causes of injuries among young children are

1. Falls - from a table, a bed or a ladder, or falling over when running.
2. Consuming 'common household' poisons, getting affected by burns (hot water or fire or excess sun burn),
3. Drowning in bathroom buckets of water or in swimming pool.
4. Subjecting to injuries while learning a new skill (bike or skate board)

## Keeping children safe

Dr Chetan has taken it up as mission to reduce unsafe environment for children through awareness, social activism, design interventions and counseling. It is his strong conviction that adults are responsible to mitigate risk for the child from unsafe environment. His practice in UK and India as a Pediatrician and attending to child injuries resulted in root cause analysis. He has created a set of steps to follow in order to best protect a child. Every step he recommends is out of an injury that a child has suffered and is not academic.

## Here are the simple steps that he recommends to get rid of the danger:

- All household chemicals should be stored in their original containers. Left over Chemicals should be disposed off and not stored. They should always be kept OUT OF SIGHT from children as they do not understand 'POISON' sign.
- Urban lifestyle which includes staircase with aesthetic designs (lack of railings, gap between stairs and rails), low lying balcony walls, low laying switchboards and

delicate furniture make it very unsafe for children.

- Do not position stools and tables near windows or parapet walls or balconies
- People living in flats or exposed to road traffic should keep the child's play area away from car park and runs.
- Kitchen/toilet cleaning items/ medicines which are colorful attracts children to consume. They should be stored in child-proof cupboards.
- Walk around the car once before starting.

## Laughable but essential as your child is more precious.

- Child Helmet when riding a bike, or wrist and knee protectors when skating.
- Let the grills in your houses be vertical. Child enjoys climbing and Horizontal grills is not "Fall-Proof".
- When the child is present along with the mother, he attempts to pull everything that he can reach. Hence, directions of cooker handle, saucepan should face the wall and not towards the child.
- Water tanks, water buckets, washing machines, mixers, grinders, and iron box should be child-distanced. Child internalizes parents/elders and their safe or unsafe behavior is imbibed.
- Role modeling is important by not violating traffic rules or double jumping stairs, or un-authorized crossing of roads.
- Teach them by telling them what to do, and what not to do
- Even though small children cannot understand all that you say, eventually they will learn to control their own behaviour. Talk to them about stopping at the traffic lights, walking across the street when the walk sign turns green.
- Stop any unsafe activity of a child whenever, wherever and however it may happen. If distance is a challenge, use voice and noise like "stop" to distract the child.
- Have emergency phone numbers near the phone
- Have first aid kit in the house and car.
- Check that homes and public places you visit with your child are safe.
- Do a first aid course which includes emergency resuscitation, so that you will know what to do.
- Last but not least – talk this – be an advocate of child safety as Child safety is not our choice, it is our responsibility!

**People tree Foundation**  
([peopletreefoundation.com](http://peopletreefoundation.com))

I met Dr Chetan Ginigeri, a humble young man who sleeps, eats, dreams, and acts on child safety. Every place he got trained or worked is so branded that you will wonder why he chose child safety than enhancing his bank balance. Yes, Dr Chetan Ginigeri is a Paediatric Intensivist, formerly heading one of the Largest Paediatric Critical Care Units in Bangalore at Narayana Hrudayalaya Multispecialty Hospital.

preventive aspects of Community Health. Their current area of thrust includes CHILD SAFETY initiative, Childhood Nutrition, Arthritis awareness and Organ Donation.

**Child safety – A new public health problem!**

“Be the small change, Make a big difference”

Dr Chetan picked up a leaf from Late DR. Venkataswamy Naidu of Arvind Eye Hospital known as DR V. Yes, He focused on eliminating needless blindness and this

**Dr Chetan believes Child safety promotion and injury prevention requires an integrated and coordinated scaling up**

Dr. Chetan is a Transplant Intensive Care specialist. He has the expertise and experience to care for children requiring solid organ transplantation, especially post liver transplantation. He got trained in leading institutes in India and abroad namely at King's College London in the United Kingdom and at the Jawaharlal Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), Puducherry and the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh.

He shunned materialism and with a set of like minded doctor friends founded the PEOPLE TREE Foundation to work for

has become a sustained movement for over four decades and is running strong even now in India as well as across the world. It is being effectively carried forward by Dr. Nachiayar.

Dr Chetan believes Child safety promotion and injury prevention requires an integrated and coordinated scaling up. It has to start at macro level at the policy making co-ordination between varied ministries and Departments of Government of India and varied State Governments.

Since child injuries happen due to several causes, the solutions will also be several. Multiple interventions need to be



implemented in an integrated manner to obtain maximum results as each one contributes for decreasing injuries to a certain extent. Road safety, home safety, School Safety, Play ground safety, safety of Public and Private Places where children visit should be given high importance to reduce child deaths and injuries. The missing link is 'Adult Awareness' while there could be several known and proven interventions and public health alerts.

Young children should be specifically

taken care of by their parents or caregivers. Specific and well-designed programs on safety of children at micro and macro level is the mission of People Tree Foundation. Few from IIM Bangalore have joined Dr Chetan in this mission to create an India Movement and can we extend an helping hand?

**If you wish to contact Dr Chetan, please call +919538897223 or write to [drchetanmd@yahoo.com](mailto:drchetanmd@yahoo.com).**

—S. Deenadayalan

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Sai Ram!

Acknowledge with grateful thanks receipt of the September issue of Conversations.

My compliments for your excellent editorial. Every issue is a pleasure to read, think over and retain for reading again.

Best wishes,

**Saranga Pani**  
Executive Director (retd),  
IDBI

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for featuring our NGO as Cover Story in your September issue.

The pictures say it all! Our elders are happy to see their pictures published. You have written the story well and have taken care to maintain their dignity.

Regards,

**Bhageerathy**  
Founder, Anandam NGO

## Editorial

**Latha Suresh**  
**Marie Banu**



**C**entre 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.

CSIM operates in Chennai, Hyderabad & Bangalore. For more information, please visit [www.csim.in](http://www.csim.in).

**Contact Persons:**

Ms. Marie Banu, Director, Chennai @ 9884700029  
Mr.K L Srivastava, Director, Hyderabad @ 9912656112  
Ms Aruna Subramaniam, Director, Bangalore @ 9886833665

**CSIM also facilitates Social Audit for social enterprises through Social Audit Network, UK and SAN, India.**

For more information, please visit [www.san-india.org](http://www.san-india.org) or contact Ms.Latha Suresh @ 92822 05123



# Education for everyone

*Eureka Child Foundation has become an agent of change today; the attempts to uplift children by way of educating them, figuring proudly atop its social initiatives.*



It's an initiative that has spread to nearly 600 villages in Tamil Nadu today. Its aim: to provide basic quality education to every child, and its methodology three-pronged. In the last two years of its existence, city-based NGO, Eureka Child Foundation, has managed to achieve what few social initiatives have come close to: fulfill most of its mission, and do so in a manner that is nothing short of admirable. And in doing so, not only has the NGO managed to achieve most of their goals, but has also played a stellar role in helping other NGOs realize their dreams and goals too.

"After-school education was the aim, and when we started out it was our hope that we could do our bit to educate every child out there," says Dr A Ravishankar, Director of Eureka Child Foundation. In a nutshell, the NGO's mission follows a three-pronged action plan: direction action, partnership and most importantly internal advocacy. However, the most visible action has been the many partnerships that Eureka Child Foundation has been involved in, more specifically with the government. "But the problem lies in quality," says Dr Ravishankar, "In fact, that's precisely why after-school education has assumed so much importance today – simply because most children in our schools don't know to read a sentence properly, or even work out a

simple subtraction."

But it would only be right to say that the story of Eureka Child Foundation began much before the organization was registered two years ago. The problems that the nation faced (especially the 1992 riots) prompted Balaji Sampath (Founder, Secretary, AID India) to do his bit for children's education and progress. When he was a student at IIT Madras, he thus began volunteering at nearby villages, teaching children a few basic subjects. It was this culture that would later go on to become the driving force behind Eureka Child Foundation, even as the NGO began a slew of project launches. These included initiatives like 'Let's Speak English', 'Toy Van' and 'Ariviyal Anandanam'. As their names suggest such drives included holistic education in subjects like prose and science; the 'Toy Van' initiative ensured that such children were given access to toys.

Today, initiatives like 'Eureka Books', 'Arogyam' and 'Eureka SuperKidz' further the cause and mission of Eureka Child Foundation. Many would agree today, that such projects not only help achieve the objectives of basic education, but represent the growing force of innovation in the field of education. Ravishankar agrees. "One of the biggest challenges that we faced while partnering with Government-run schools, was the fact that when the supervising

officer would be transferred, or left, many useful measures that he helped introduce would also inadvertently die a natural death," he says, "That's why, we decided that our initiatives should pass the basic longevity test, and stay true to what they set out to do."

And for all these impressive plans, the goals of the NGO itself aren't too lofty. "We just want to ensure that every child has a basic education," Ravishankar says. "This is not an attempt to teach a child big things; it's only our bit to ensure that minimum education is provided to all children today." But what must certainly win admirers for the NGO all over, is the methodology that it adopts, through its mission of education for all. "Small things like setting goals for children to ensure on-time completion of portions, or bringing about interactive teaching methods to the classrooms really matter," says Ravishankar.

And like all social initiatives, funding is certainly a key element to the functioning of Eureka Child Foundation. Patrons can support the initiative by adopting villages, buying books and other learning material for children, and even oversee the education of children. The NGO's goal is to reach 45,000 children in 700 villages by the end of the year. Research carried out by the NGO has also revealed that following its efforts to educate children in a more holistic manner, the number of children who began knowing to simply add numbers also increased over time, as did the number of Standard Four children who knew division and read sentences in English. Statistics have also revealed the children from Classes 5 and 6 improved their knowledge of advanced math by significant margins.

The road ahead is simple. "We want to continue doing what we are currently engaged in: providing children with the best possible basic education. We don't have lofty plans for ourselves, or expect to do great things," says Ravishankar, "Our ambitions, goals and aims are limited. But we are confident of achieving what we set out to do." And there's no doubt, that in its efforts, Eureka Child Foundation has become an agent of change today; the attempts to uplift children by way of educating them, figuring proudly atop its social initiatives. And like Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world", what Eureka Child Foundation has successfully managed to achieve, is a sincere attempt to change this world one step at a time.



# A give-and-take approach to rural strategy

In a recent interview with Forbes, Stuart L. Hart (an American academic, writer, theorist and founder of Enterprise for a Sustainable World), who advocated the concept of 'fortune at the bottom of the pyramid' with C.K. Prahalad, indicated that the time has come for companies operating at the base of the pyramid (BoP) to upgrade their business models to BoP Version 2.0. In other words, instead of just developing affordable products and distributing them through existing channels (often NGOs), the author emphasised that companies should co-create with local communities and build sustainable, innovative and long-lasting products. That's exactly what S. Sivakumar, the CEO of ITC's agri-business division and the man behind e-Choupal relates to personally.

It's no secret that ITC's agri-business division has been relying on this model, for over a decade now, to support the company's triple bottomline approach; that of doing good to the society and environment while improving its own profitability.

Take the case of e-Choupal; ITC had a clear vision when it designed e-Choupal in 2000. It intended to provide a competitive agri-sourcing mechanism for ITC's packaged food business and to co-create an efficient channel for farmers to sell their produce and also to access crop-related information. Today, the initiative has empowered four million farmers across 40,000 villages and is a key element of the supply chain for ITC's biscuits and snacks division.

Similarly, the company's social and farm forestry innovation has created employment opportunities for 63 million people and greened 1,40,000 hectares, while its watershed projects and animal husbandry initiatives have enriched large tracts of rural communities.

As Sivakumar points out, while this model has resulted in the total shareholder returns increasing by an annual compound rate of 25.6 per cent per annum in the last fifteen years, the company still faces limitations due to the slow pace of reforms in the agricultural sector.

In this interview with The Smart CEO, Sivakumar talks about how the Indian agricultural sector has evolved over the years, the key growth drivers and challenges it poses to ITC's agri-business division and the impact of this on the overall group's business. He also touches upon key lessons that companies should keep in mind, when foraging into rural markets.

## What are the growth drivers for ITC's agri-business division (ABD), today?

Our primary external growth driver is the rapidly changing Indian consumer. As you know, India has successfully transitioned out of an era of food shortages, with the help of giant strides taken by Indian agriculture over the years. With growing awareness and increasing per capita incomes, today's consumers are seeking better quality and more variety in their food products. They prefer



products that offer convenience while buying and using.

The second growth driver is food safety, which is another area of serious concern. Much like the way agricultural production system responded to the growing demand in the past, there is an opportunity for the agri-business system to respond and deliver these requirements to the consumer. The third growth driver is the fast-expanding rural market. In the last decade, supported by the increasing commodity prices and focused government interventions, rural GDP has grown 30 per cent faster than the urban GDP. Higher incomes are naturally raising the aspirations of rural people for a better quality of life. The agri-sourcing infrastructure built by ITC in rural India is equally well placed to serve these rural consumers through marketing services, retailing, and distribution businesses.

Besides adding value through conventional processing and packaging, today's agri-businesses can also explore a number of additional sources of value creation, such as, building and managing supply chains that preserve produce identity, tightly integrating agri-production systems to improve productivity and align quality to consumer needs and, effectively managing production and price risks through insurance products and commodity exchanges.

## What challenges does the division face?

The most crucial challenge we face today is the slow pace of reforms in the agricultural sector. In states where the Agricultural Produce Marketing Act has not reformed, we cannot engage with the farmer directly. Similarly, whenever the Essential Commodities Act has been imposed, we cannot buy and stock volumes beyond a stipulated limit, rendering the infrastructure unviable and the curbs on futures and options through

Forward Contracts Regulation Act makes price-risk management impossible.

## Where does ITC ABD fit into the overall scheme of things for the group?

Firstly, ABD supports ITC's branded packaged foods business by preserving the identity and product integrity of the agricultural raw material, by ensuring traceability along the supply chain, thus creating an important means to differentiate the branded food products.

Secondly, through its agricultural extension work consisting of Choupal Pradarshan Khets and Farmers' Field Schools, ABD provides an assured supply of sufficient quantities of raw material, with a variety of desirable properties; another key requirement for branded food products.

Thirdly, ABD provides an important window for ITC's FMCG products into rural markets. For instance, Choupal Haats, the round-the-year village level activities, communicate the values and benefits of brands, through interactive games and competitions. This results in direct consumer engagement and sampling of products. On the other hand, Choupal Mahotsav is a larger format event with three-day festivities and celebrations held at the Integrated Farmer Facility Centres (Choupal Saagar) of ITC. The Choupal Saagar also houses modern format retail stores.

Lastly, ABD also provides a unique platform to execute several rural initiatives that are integral to ITC's triple bottomline philosophy. Besides efficiently linking millions of farmers to markets through its socially inclusive value chains, to enhance the agricultural productivity, ITC adopts a sustainable intensification model to conserve soil nutrients, moisture and other natural resources. This is besides helping farmers expand their rainwater harvesting potential individually and collectively.

## What factors does a company have to

take into consideration when determining which products have to be extended to rural markets? How can it strike a balance between price and profitability?

Three types of products have higher chances of success in rural markets. Products that help improve incomes of the rural producers (information, knowledge, production inputs, credit, risk management solutions), products that make up for the lack of infrastructure in rural India (solar energy-based products, wireless communication, personal transportation like two wheelers and SUVs) and the products that meet the aspirations of rural people in terms of a better quality of life (personal care products, entertainment).

If the value perceived by the consumer is high, price is not a constraint. Notwithstanding this position, since the level of incomes are low, strategies such as single-serve packs, low-cost delivery systems and scale economies will help in balancing low unit price with profitability in rural markets.

**ITC has worked with the rural consumer for a while now. How has consumer behaviour evolved over the years in rural India? What are the most visible changes to rural consumer behaviour?**

With higher incomes and better penetration of media, the rural consumer's aspirations have increased. Real brands are finding their way into rural homes, instead of spurious look-alikes. With access to education and improvement in road connectivity, women are coming out a lot more and are influencing purchase and usage decisions. It is heartening to see the improving sales of drudgery-reducing products such as washing machines, gas stoves and other kitchen appliances.

## 5 LESSONS TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE BoP BUSINESS

1. It is imperative to immerse oneself and develop first-hand insights on rural consumers and be able to tailor-make relevant products and services.
2. Plan for the long haul and commit the necessary resources. To conserve resources, it makes sense to go regional before a national scale-up.
3. Co-opt local influencers and leverage word-of-mouth techniques to reach the consumers, considering inadequate media penetration.
4. For the same reason, rely a lot more on localised below-the-line promotion activities, as opposed to above-the-line mass media.
5. Cognise for the heterogeneity in the rural markets, rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

—Madhumita Prabhakar

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# For them, with them

The home at Paraniputhur today hosts 180 women, who are trained to take up simple responsibilities here

“The name hardly matters. Whether we call them partially abled or mentally challenged, it only reflects our attitude towards them,” begins Ms Zoraida Samuel, Managing Trustee of Rehoboth, a home for the mentally challenged women in Chennai. Leaders from the social development sector have expounded the challenges in managing a home, but with mentally challenged individuals, home transcends to shelter, training centre, workplace, and more. It is a place where their inherent abilities and personalities that were never looked at by others are honed to make them independent and productive members in the society.

Rehoboth is one such home. It started as a shelter for 2 women in a rented house. The desire to care for these women was born during her days of graduation in Psychology. “My placement with an opportunity school required me to work on the social and emotional environment, intelligence quotient of the special children and the kind of special education they needed. Academic work apart, I was shocked by my observations there,” remarks Zoraida, who goes on to explain the situation that moved her conscience. “Adolescent children who were mentally challenged were not wanted at home. They were not seen as children, or as individuals who were different in terms of needs and functionality, but as liabilities. It was too raw for me to buy that. I immediately decided to do something for them.”

Experience during her Post Graduation in Psychiatric Social Work threw her to the plane of acute abandoning by families. Adding to this trauma, which the victims may not even realize sometimes, is the exploitation they face on the streets after being abandoned. Her tenure in Little Drops, an NGO that provides care and shelter for the abandoned elderly, as Project Coordinator for four years, opened doors for further thinking and reflection. When two mentally challenged abandoned women were brought to Little Drops, the organization expressed its inability to accommodate them as they were not equipped to meet the needs of these people. Zoraida was on instantly. She decided to do something for these women. “A friend of mine came forward to give her house on rent. That’s how Rehoboth was born,” recalls an emotional Zoraida.

In the first two years, she managed to work at Little Drops and take care of these women. “The number of inmates grew and I quit my work at Little Drops. I knew it was a call from the almighty and I decided to serve these women,” she says.

Rehoboth, registered as a Public Charitable Trust in 1998, Chennai, branched out in a short period to meet

different needs of its inmates. Abandoned women who are rescued from streets are referred by police and also by NGOs. “Intriguingly, the increasing number in the home prompted me to plan a visit to other organizations that worked for mental health,” shares Zoraida, who concluded that almost all of them worked for children, and that needs of such adults were not paid enough attention to. This is when Rehoboth made a decision to focus on mentally challenged adults. Men and

challenged women are left on the streets,” she despises. Her calmness is back the moment she begins to talk of her inmates’ capabilities. “Some of them exhibit extraordinary intellectual abilities; they value relationships, express feelings, and long to belong somewhere—just like you and me,” her words resonates the pain she feels for them.

The home at Paraniputhur today hosts 180 women, who are trained to take up simple responsibilities here. ‘The

PUTHUMAI’ is pooled in to meet the running expenses of both the homes. Besides the economic aspect, engaging the inmates in these activities also make it therapeutic for their behavioral problems. Farm products, donated and usable house-hold articles are sold after minor repairs, besides products produced at the rehabilitation centre.

The first step in rehabilitation is a complete health check-up which makes the organisation understand their needs and assess the institution’s capacity to meet them. All inmates are tested for HIV, pregnancy, infections, diseases and others and in the case of pregnant women, Rehoboth follows a tailored approach so that their children are not affected in any way.

Presently, under the project ARISE, the child and mother are given a separate room. While the mother is under constant medical supervision and undergoes vocational training, the child is allowed to lead a normal life. “All the children born to these women are normal. But, a new concern has emerged. Every other person that these children interact with is mentally challenged. As this is not healthy for child development, we are working towards providing a separate facility for these children so that the programme does not create an institutionalized system,” says Zoraida.

Rehoboth has also opened a special school for special children from poor communities, as part of its prevention programme. This centre provides them with the much needed rehabilitation and therapy which they cannot afford otherwise. The fundamental concern is to prevent abuse and exploitation of mentally challenged women when their guardians are away at work.

Talking of sustainability, Zoraida explains that meeting the operational costs is a huge challenge. “In order to sustain a life of quality, most of our residents need psychiatric and neurological medication. Associated problems like epilepsy, physical disabilities and motor skill coordination need to be addressed with specific professional help. With no government help and foreign aid, we have been able to run the home at a monthly expense of three lakh rupees through contributions from friends and donors.”

The journey is still on. Rehoboth is working tirelessly to bring in cheers in the lives of mentally challenged women and make the general public realize what it takes to make them smile. After all, they have always wanted to live as part of us.

Can we now see them as partially abled?

—Shanmuga Priya.T



women from this group had different needs beginning with infrastructure. This along with the concern of sexual abuse women were subjected to, pushed Rehoboth to work for mentally challenged women specifically.

“These women were only moderately challenged, capable of caring for self, but were never given the requisite exposure or even toilet training. Most of the families, even before exploring the affordable options available, conclude that they cannot afford any treatment. Once the mother dies, the mentally

residents are trained in: handicraft making, tailoring, embroidery and candle making. Orders are taken for weddings and other occasions for flowers and embroidery works. The ability of the inmates in learning and performing in an organized manner encouraged the board to build another shelter that provides vocational rehabilitation. Thus a rehabilitation shelter with dairy, poultry and vegetable cultivation was initiated in a farmland in Somangalam village. The income from the sale of farm products in their outlet called ‘ASAI and



# Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

**A**n interesting conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi with his disciple.

**D.:** Which is the best of all the religions? What is Sri Bhagavan's method?

**M.:** All religions and methods are one and the same.

**D.:** Different methods are taught for liberation.

**M.:** Why should you be liberated? Why not remain as you are now?

**D.:** I want to get rid of pain. To be rid of it is said to be liberation.

**M.:** That is what all religions teach.

**D.:** But what is the method?

**M.:** To retrace your way back.

**D.:** Whence have I come?

**M.:** That is just what you should know. Did these questions arise in your sleep? Did you not exist then? Are you not the same being now?

**D.:** Yes, I was in sleep; so also the mind; but the senses had merged, so I could not speak.

**M.:** Are you jiva? Are you the mind? Did the mind announce itself to you in sleep?



**D.:** No. But elders say that the jiva is different from Isvara.

**M.:** Leave Isvara alone. Speak for yourself.

**D.:** What about myself? Who am I?

**M.:** That is just it. Know it, when all will be known; if not, ask then.

**D.:** On waking I see the world and I am not changed from sleep.

**M.:** But this is not known in sleep. Now or then, the same you remain. Who has changed now? Is your nature to be changing or remain unchanging?

**D.:** What is the proof?

**M.:** Does one's own being require a proof? Only remain aware of your own self, all else will be known.

**D.:** Why then do the dualists and non-dualists quarrel among themselves?

**M.:** If each one minds his own business, there will be no quarrel.

—Excerpted from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*



## Belongingness Dimensions – Feedback and Review

renders the process into a blame game, defense, protecting self activity. That is when the faith in the feedback system is lost completely and it does not in turn feed into the growth and development of the individual or the organization.

Every individual has three gaps (J.M.Sampath, 1995).

1. Between Intension and Action
2. Between Action and Perception
3. Between Perception and Expectation

While it is easier to tap what one wants to do and how one actually ends up doing; it is difficult to tap what one does and how it is perceived by the others. This action – perception gap is bridged through the process of feedback. It is actually a wonderful process of reviewing what has gone, how it is perceived and how it can be bettered. Feedback enables an individual to:

- Review and learn a different perspective from the others
- Bridge the gap between action and perception
- Understand the multiple dimensions of each action and its implications
- Have a space to reflect, introspect and a possibility to grow and develop
- While feedback is a continuous process, it cannot become an over-kill. Anything that goes beyond the effective zone is likely to lose effectiveness. So, feedback has to be an institutionalized process well planned at periodic intervals. It can be coupled with informal processes that happen in cliques and matched groups within the organization.

Feedback many a time, come mixed with both technical and human issues. While technically some things may be correct the human issues will not allow the individuals to receive it objectively. Every

feedback has to be properly captured and sifted to understand the technical issue in them as well as the human dimension. While technical issues may be resolved by looking at alternatives, formulating new process, anchoring on the vision and goal based on the values of the organization; the human dimensions are tough to resolve. They are usually seeped in ego, restrictive beliefs, past experiences, future fears. Unless these are not addressed at the core level in the culture of the organization, the human dimensions will continue to surface during every feedback session. This is where the HR has a lead role to play. They have to tap the human dimensions that emerge and ensure it is rectified in the shortest possible time.

The beliefs and perspectives that enable effective feedback in the culture of the organization are

- The culture of the organization that can give and receive feedback effectively has learning and openness as core practicing values. The people need to believe that feedback enables them to learn and grow. They need to be receptive to the inputs that come from the environment and be willing to examine the data and learn.
- The intent of the feedback has to be purely developmental in the culture of the organization. That is possible if the entire organization is working towards the vision and all the members believe if anything can be bettered it has to be done in the larger interest.
- The feedback does not emerge from the ego directed to another's ego which becomes a fault finding activity. It has to come from the conscious intent of love, respect and confidence within the person who is giving it as well as in the person who is receiving it.
- The feedback has to be well

documented with intent to find solutions so that the situation does not occur again. If a lot of quick fixes become the part of culture then, people also loose respect for the process. The value of giving feedback goes down if only the feedback is received without a betterment of the situation.

- The feedback mechanism and matrix as to the receiver, enabler and solution provider has to be well defined within the organization. Otherwise a lot of informal feedbacks will be floating around with the hope that it will reach the right person which can be detrimental to the psychic health of the organization.
- The timing of the feedback is extremely important. When the right thing is said at the right time the value of the same is very high. But if the right thing is said at the wrong time the value of the feedback goes down tremendously.

The extent to which there is a powerful feedback process reflects the extent of trust, love and belongingness in the culture of the organization.

### Reflections:

1. What are the feedback mechanisms that operate in my organization?
2. At an individual level how comfortable am I to give feedback and receive feedback?
3. What processes do I use to document feedback and ensure the learning is captured?
4. What is the follow through mechanism to ensure the learning and openness dimensions are kept alive the organization?

—Dr. Kalpana Sampath, PhD.

**A** critical process that will enable growth and sustenance of an individual and the organization is the feedback – review mechanism. While this is important it is also most feared or hated or loved depending on the culture of the organization. The process of feedback can either make or mar the entire experience for the individuals. HR of the organization has to take great care to ensure this process is set properly and carefully within the organization.

The word feedback is defined as “essential to the working and survival of all regulatory mechanisms found throughout living and non-living nature, and in man-made systems”. Feedback is seen a two way flow. Fed-back - it is inherent to all interactions, whether human-to-human, human-to-machine, or machine-to-machine. There is also an inherent expectation that feedback is given about the prior behaviour is with an intent to adjust its current and future behavior to achieve the desired result. (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/feedback.html#ixzz2i3UVcAj4>)

Feedback and review are seen as critical process with the outside clientele or customers. But many a time the internal customers are forgotten. It's last priority. Further, it is intended to be a natural, objective process. But many a time treated as an opportunity for bashing, critique, finding fault, ego massaging exercise. This



# Battle of the Buffet 2013



**C**hennai Mission and CSIM organised the Battle of the Buffet 2013, a fundraiser for charities in the state of Tamil Nadu. The event was held on 1st October 2013 at Chennai Trade Centre, Nandambakkam.

15 leading hotels and restaurants in the city offered a lavish spread of their exquisite dishes to donors who contributed 5000 rupees or more to NGOs who registered for this event.

The event was part of the Joy of Giving celebrations and the food was contributed for free by hotels.

Students from Loyola College and Institute of Hotel Management Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition volunteered for the event and over 2000 people participated in this fundraiser.

Actor Rohini anchored the event and a musical concert was led by singers Vijay Yesudas, Sriram and Srilekha Parthasarathy. Besides, students of Musician Anil Srinivas also entertained the audience.

The event raised over 2 crore rupees benefiting 51 NGOs in the state of Tamil Nadu.

For more information, please visit [www.battleofbuffet.org](http://www.battleofbuffet.org).





# “I always wanted to combine firmness with compassion.”

**Dr Prateep V Philip IPS** talks to **Marie Banu** about the **Friends of Police** movement and its impact in our society.

**D**r Prateep V Philip IPS currently holds the position of Additional Director General of Police (Economic Offences Wing) in Chennai. He holds a doctorate in management studies on the Friends of Police Movement that he pioneered in Tamil Nadu.

Dr Philip also developed an innovative concept ‘Equilibrium Thinking’ to bridge the gap between universal values and modern living with relevant application and explanation. He recently caught the eye of global management experts with his theory of ‘Excnomics’, a new global discipline that focuses on studying excellence in all its dimensions.

He has won prestigious awards for professional excellence and outstanding contribution in India and abroad. Some of his awards include: Queen’s Award for Police Training and Development out of all commonwealth nations in 2002, Rashtriya Suraksha Award at Global Security Conference, New Delhi, Communal Harmony Award, and Rotary award of Excellence.

Dr. Philip has also been nominated for Roman Magsaysay Award and International innovator’s Award at Harvard University

*In an exclusive interview, Dr Prateep V Philip IPS talks to Marie Banu about the Friends of Police movement and its impact in our society.*

## About your childhood, family, work at SBI?

I grew up in Bangalore and studied in St Joseph’s school, the same school that produced Rahul Dravid and Sabeer Bhatia of hotmail fame. I did my graduation at St Joseph’s College and my Masters in Political Science and International Relations at Bangalore University.

During school days, I was a mediocre student. Without too much of effort, and studying just before examinations, I used to get a first class.

As a student, my passion lay in studying about great lives. I was always looking for inspiration. I used to read a lot of biographies. I participated in debates and extempore speech. I also had a passion for writing since childhood. Some of my writings were liked by my teachers and they read it out in class. This encouraged me, and I wrote a novelette titled ‘Red Sun’ when I was studying in the sixth standard. It was about a family in Thailand. I also wrote a lot of middle articles for the newspaper, mostly humorous.

In my Pre-University, I took humanities deliberately, although I had scored high marks in Science. I always chose to go by my passion and so took arts subjects.

While pursuing my first year of Master’s degree, I got the opportunity to work as a probationary officer in SBI. I



Photo: Nandhanandh Maran

was with the bank from 1984 to 1987 and resigned in order to join the Indian Police Service.

My older brother is a doctor in Australia and my parents are no more. My mother was serving in the health sector and my father was a businessman.

## From being an ASP to ADGP. What has been your most challenging moments?

As ASP trainee, I used to take interest in petitioners. I worked with a Superintendent of Police, who is now a DGP. He was very humane and used to say that ‘Life is larger than law’. I started looking at dimensions beyond law.

There was once a petitioner who did not have support from his family to sustain himself. I visited his home along with the Inspector and requested his family members to support the petitioner.

In another incident, there was an encroachment and the police were physically uprooting houses. My heart went out to an elderly man who was trying to protect his home from being demolished. I quickly sent a hat out to mobilise funds to support this person. These are scenes that come back from my training days.

I always wanted to combine firmness with compassion. One of the reasons is my sense of biblical values. I began to believe in Jesus since the age of 17, though I was born a Christian. The values I picked up made me think different.

I have been through several difficult

situations, which no SP has solved before me. Soon after Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, I was posted at Ramanathapuram in 1994. There were caste clashes in Rajapalayam that threatened to spread across the state and I handled the situation effectively by ordering ‘shoot at sight’. It appeared in the national news and psychologically deterred the people from indulging in violence. With just two casualties we were able to bring the situation under control.

Managing a million people with just 1000 men is a big challenge for an IPS officer, because only 50 percent would be effectively available at a given point in time. It is only by virtue of your wit, wisdom, and deployment of manpower, you will have to solve a problem cost-effectively. I learnt the basics of man management, police management, law and order management, and solved some major crimes and challenging law and order situations.

## Can you tell us about the ‘Friends of Police’ movement?

One morning, when I was sitting in my portico, the idea of Friends of Police (FOP) flashed in my mind. I spoke about this in many forums, and it was well received. When I was shifted to Ramanathapuram, I moved out of my comfort zone. I therefore wanted to do something out of the way. So, without seeking any formal sanction, I decided to start the ‘Friends of the Police’ movement.

I wanted it to be a mass movement in community policing and aimed to enrol 20,000 FOPs to support the 1000 policemen of the district. I said that it should be a mass movement in community policing, and like the freedom movement it should involve the people.

I kept contemplating why God preserved my life and saved me from a major international disaster. I call it creative questioning. When you keep asking yourself questions, at some point you get a creative answer. After a long while, I got the answer: “It is to humanise the police.”

People were encouraged to enrol in FOP and serve the State by partnering with the police. With the media attention it got, I realized that the idea could spread across the state, country and have a trans-local significance.

Police is hated by people, for one reason or the other. I call it police isolation and public antagonism or the “power syndrome”. If you share power, people will like you. If you don’t, they will hate you.

I requested the Hon’ble Chief Minister Dr J. Jayalithaa to extend this concept to the whole state, and in one government order she gave the approval. Then, it took ten years to be recognized. In 2002 it won the British Queen’s award for Innovation in Police Training and Development. We used the 15000 £ to set up a state-of-the-art training centre in Chennai. That has trained 150,000 people with just 20 lakh rupees as funds per year again sanctioned by the Hon’ble Chief Minister in response to my appeal.

FOP is a force multiplier. One policeman along with a FOP doubles his power and influence. FOP will therefore be a bridge to the wider community to which he belongs. There are FOPs in every police station today. They register with the local police station and are monitored by the Superintendent of the Police. In a year, five workshops are held in every district and commissionerate. 40 police personnel, from the rank of Police Constable to the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police; and 40 FOP, from students to retired persons, participate in these workshops.

In many cases, FOP has come to the rescue of policemen who were about to be assaulted as it happened in a tea estate in Ooty. Once I received information from a FOP, who belonged to a minority community in Kilakarai, about some explosives being planned to be used against a procession. We could arrest and seize the explosives with this timely information. The information that I did not receive from professional intelligence agencies, I received from an ordinary fisherman who was a FOP.