

Conversations Today

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

As we celebrate the National Sports Day on 29th August, let us discuss about Sports.

Education and sports should be given equal priority in schools and colleges. This is because sports play a great role in maintaining health and fitness, improving concentration levels as well as cultivating social and communication skills. By playing sports, one develops high confidence levels and gains discipline and team spirit. It also helps in character building and inculcating good values.

The growing academic pressure leads to high level of stress among students. Indulging in sports or games for at least an hour everyday gives children the much needed break and helps them rejuvenate. It is a good way to combat stress and anxiety which is a growing problem among students these days.

While sport has value in everyone's life, it is even more important for persons with disability as they often face stigma and discrimination in many societies. They are generally excluded from education, employment and community life thereby deprived of opportunities that are essential for their social development, health and well-being.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first legally binding international instrument to address the rights of persons with disabilities and sport. Article 30 of the Convention addresses both mainstream and disability-specific sport and stipulates that "States Parties shall take appropriate measures to encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels"

Sport changes the persons with disability in an equally profound way by empowering them to realize their potential and advocate for change in society. It teaches them to communicate effectively as well as learn the significance of teamwork and cooperation. It also develops greater independence by making them physically and mentally stronger.

Today, there are several sports activities that are organised at national and international levels and the number of persons with disabilities involved in such activities are on the rise. It is reported that 93% of women with disabilities are not involved in sport and women comprise only one-third of athletes with disabilities in international competitions. By providing women with disabilities the opportunity to compete and demonstrate their physical ability, sport can help to reduce gender stereotypes and negative perceptions associated with women with disabilities.

Our cover story talks about Cricket Association for the Blind in India, the sports wing of Samarthanam and affiliated to World Blind Cricket Ltd. The motive behind organizing Cricket for the Blind is to provide the players with a platform to showcase hidden talent.

Read and get inspired!

—Marie Banu

THE POWER OF CHOICE

"Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, it's always your choice." – Wayne Dyer



We know we can exercise our choice, yet get trapped in our automatic reactions to events. Despite our intention to change we fail to bring forth the power of choice. What we need is a bridge to cross from where we are, a place of choicelessness to a place of choice, or empowerment.

The bridge is made up of three lens;

1. Realistic Optimism

Using this lens requires asking yourself two simple questions when you experience that you are reacting. The first one is "What are the facts in this situation?" The second is, "What's the story I'm telling myself about those facts?"

2. Reverse Lens

This lens requires viewing the world through

the lens of the person who "caused" the reaction in you. It doesn't mean sacrificing your own point of view but rather widening your perspective.

With the reverse lens, you ask yourself, "What is this person feeling, and in what ways does that make sense?" Or put more starkly: "Where's my responsibility in all this?"

3. Long Lens

When your current circumstances are beyond the first and second lens, the long lens provides a way of looking beyond the present to imagine a better future. Begin with this question: "Regardless of how I feel about what's happening right now, how can I grow and learn from this experience?"

Yours Energetically

Ms. Bhuvaneshwari Ravi is trainer, facilitator and coach of the Positive Energy (PE) program. She is a spiritual seeker with a vision of transforming her own energy state from surviving to being. In this journey she has gathered deep insights and is continuously working towards creating a pathway for more seekers. With years of exposure to spiritual practices like yoga, reiki, and personal development interventions like coaching, she is working in the Organization Development and Leadership Development space.

She can be contacted at bhuvaneshwari@teamthink.co.in for arranging Positive Energy training and Coaching sessions.

EDITORIAL

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

Bridging the Gap

Raghu Nath Reddy is the founder of “She Endeavours”, an organization that addresses the information gap on Rights, Health, Finance and Leadership, by grooming grassroots level change agents and local leaders who are armed with information and resources that can be spread among those (especially women) who are still living in the depths of obscurity. Since his student days, Raghu Nath has been involved in youth leadership organizations such as the National Service Scheme (NSS), AISEC and the Association of Leadership Development (LDA). When asked to give a brief recounting of his early years, this CSIM alumnus says, “I come from a financially strapped family in South India. We lived in a tiny, drought ridden village, with one primary school. Though not literate, my parents tried their hardest to send my three sisters and me to school. However, since the next English medium school was in a different town and sending girls so far away to study was considered taboo, I got the unique privilege, as the male kid, to go there, while my sisters continued their education at the Telugu medium school, just five kilometres away from home. For almost a decade, my family was in dire poverty. While my sisters didn’t get even three square meals a day, I was encouraged to stay in a hostel so that I would not be deprived of food. I would go to my relatives’ home during the holidays too. My sisters, on the other hand, endured untold hardships back home. They would go to the fields to work all day every day.” Raghu Nath observed that his sisters had no awareness about the world outside their village. They didn’t know about education opportunities, physical and mental health, digital literacy or employment opportunities. He decided that he would study hard and educate himself on all of these wide-ranging topics.

Riding on the constant support of a loving family that would go to any stretch to give him good education, Raghu Nath came out a district topper in High School. He passed his Bachelors in Technology with Distinction, on a Merit Scholarship provided by the State Government of Andhra Pradesh. He further pursued Post Graduate Diploma in Construction Project Management. During his Diploma, apart from the academic assignments, Raghu Nath grabbed an opportunity to work with Tata Housing Development Company. Says he, “This gave me deep exposure in planning, primary and secondary management functions with a significant insight into business management perspectives. Having faced severe financial hardships all along, I believed in the importance of creating opportunities for myself and fighting any odds with sheer perseverance and diligence.”



“Since childhood I have seen my mother and three sisters facing problems simply due to a lack of information. This inspired me to do something for all girls and women; to be the support they can rely on. In 2017 I started brainstorming on this with my mentors and friends. I was keen on publishing stories of women who had overcome extraordinary challenges. I knew I wanted to work on Gender Equality and also that I wanted this venture to be the voice of women. So I presented the idea to my mentor, Ms. Aruna. She came up with a name for it, and that is how ‘She Endeavours’ came into being.” He says, adding that, “In the initial days of setting up She Endeavours I came across the story of Rehmata, an illiterate rural woman who helped her co-sister come out of a cycle of domestic abuse by simply plying her with necessary legal information. It left me amazed at the scope and potential of women armed with a little information and awareness! Gradually what started out as a collection of stories on inspirational women, developed into a huge resource for women’s welfare.”

She Endeavours today conducts workshops on Gender Sensitivity, Entrepreneurship, Digital Literacy and Cyber Security. The CEO Connect Program serves as a platform for budding women entrepreneurs to connect with accomplished leaders for mentoring and incubating their ideas

“Professor K.L. Shrivastava of CSIM helped me in developing the strategy for She Endeavors. Twice a week I would meet with him and take his guidance.”

into viable products. Their website contains important information on women’s rights, legal/social/educational services, and their social media is filled with awareness messaging. “We are also working on developing serious games using VR technology to address mental health related problems,” adds Raghu Nath eagerly.

Initially, seeing his struggles in setting up the organization, Raghu Nath’s mentor Ms. Aruna suggested he join CSIM’s Certificate on Social Entrepreneurship course. He says, “CSIM provide me with knowledge of law, fund development, social research, social marketing and management tools such as project management, finance, human resource management and accountability. The synergy in the class was amazing. We had the opportunity to meet social leaders and learn from their experience. Professor K.L. Shrivastava helped me in developing the strategy for She Endeavors. Twice a week I would meet with him and take his guidance”

Today, with a flourishing corporate

career, Raghu Nath is more than well equipped to handle the challenges of his thriving NGO. Has his career helped his passion in some way, we ask. Pat comes the reply, “Yes, corporate sector experience and skills helped me in establishing the process of certain operations in the organization. Defining timelines and targets improve the productivity of the human resources and the organization on the whole. These organizational skills, which I implemented in She Endeavors to good effect, come from my working in the corporate sector.”

Raghu Nath juggles his twin pursuits with a rare sense of balance. “I dedicate two hours on weekdays and four to six hours on weekends to She Endeavors. For most of the tasks I use digital tools, which saves time in the management. Volunteer management is the key,” says he.

“My vision is to see that in our country, women do not miss out on anything due to a lack of information; that they are no longer the ‘weaker’ section of the society; that they are financially independent, are treated equal to their counterparts and get equal opportunities to learn and exhibit their skills. She Endeavors will continue to instill financial independence, open up equal learning opportunities, access to information and firmly stand by the rights of every woman.”

—Archana Ramesh

Leader & Leadership Matters...

17. Structure and Context : Tech-savvy Leadership efficiency



Meaning of being structured in leadership:

The Leader is organized and systematic while at work; and understands the significance of context, place, and time in all his/her transactions while at work. (LOI, www.discoverself.com). It is a construct or arrange according to a plan; give a pattern or organization to. Tech-Savvy is possessing a collection of technology and tech-related skills that act as a platform on which efficiencies are built (www.solutions21.com)

One of the major requirement in Leadership competency of the current era is the ability to be Tech savvy. The binding factor for the previously discussed attributes in Leadership orientation is structure and context sensitivity. In the digital world there have been huge contributions from the technology arena to support people in being structured and organized and thereby enabling higher level of efficiency. To understand the role of technology as well as the benefits of being tech savvy for a Leader, I approached Shri Prathaap Bhimasena Rao (PhD), a technocrat as well as management person who has been most adept in using tools and technology in his corporate as well as entrepreneurial ventures. Having over thirteen certifications with him he has myriad experiences in being an Entrepreneur, Strategist, Methodology and Framework architect, Consultant, Compliance management. An avid learner and technocrat, with Masters in Statistics, he plays numbers with ease and precision.

Thank you Prathaap for giving me the time to share your thoughts. You have been in positions of leadership and led teams, what does 'being structured' mean to you?

The way I see being systematic is the ability to understand when to do what, the clarity on what things I can do now vs later and how clear am I with my priorities. This can be seen from long term and short term. If I am clear of the path few decades ahead, I can come back and know what is to be done now for that path ahead. Typically people connect to task and activities as being structured. But I believe structure needs to be from a larger vision and mission point of view. We have to break the long term into smaller capsules of things to be done based on the vision, mission, goals framework and each goal will have lot of activities, plans and tasks. If I can structure the way I want to achieve my larger goals, short term and long term, then the way I will put my discipline and structure my tasks will be better.

As a leader if I am able to structure everything from a larger perspective and then make sure my smaller granular activities are able to happen, my discipline is in place. When the team comes with tasks to do, the leader must be able to fit each of them into the larger holistic picture and clearly articulate it, also knowing where the isolated activities fit in. otherwise, the leader thinks they are busy all the time but not able align the actions.

We are trying to understand the tools and technology that are available today that will help a Leader to be structured and more context relevant in decisions. Can you throw some light on that and its benefits and issues?

There are many tools available. Most commonly used tools like Gantt chart, project planning, goal trackers, CRM for customer connect, mobile apps and to do list management, and so on. As a leader, the challenge is to know what works for them and their team and which tool fits and what does not fit in. For example, there are many tools in the garage. As a mechanic I need to know what I have to use for what purpose and how. I can't use a spanner where I have to use a screw driver. There is no dearth for appropriate tools. Each one has a merit and a demerit. Technology is an enabler. It cannot do things for you.

For example a leader can have to do list as a recorder on the phone or a checklist that you can write and keep in your pocket. There is no one way. A Gantt chart will give a lot more extensive deep dive into resources, timelines, and work flow for better project planning. There are also war rooms where it is a walk-through for the activities and the entire team will have a visual clarity on what needs to be done when with a flow chart. The roles and responsibilities can be connected better and efficiency is ensured due to clarity. In the digital world, creation of tools for planning connect all my senses – visual, auditory, logical, aesthetic, kinesthetic and therefore there is a better way of ensuring things will be done.

Prathaap, you have been one of the youngest Vice Presidents of large MNCs like HP and Hewitt. You have also served various corporations successfully in several leadership roles at a very young age. Can you share any experience from the corporate?

When I worked in HP, our team consisted of 550 people spread over nearly 22 countries each one in different time zones – most of the time it is virtual connect meetings and calendar will be blocked based on the availability. The biggest challenge for the leader was to know which time zone who is there and what is appropriate for each of them. The leader had to juggle various other constraints. If people are not available at the appropriate time, the Leader may also assume the team members are not serious or not efficient. The tool when used will have several features like add on calendars, time zone features and so on. The team will have varied people in different ages and gender. The leader will have to take care of those too while fixing virtual meetings using the tool. Understanding the context is very important for the Leader while being structured. Structure and context go hand in hand. The other things that impact structure are diversity, inclusiveness, cross-border issues, virtual vs face to face issues, each of these are constraints when it comes to an organization. But if it is a smaller set up sometimes people assume these tools are not necessary.

Actually smaller the team more and better is the connection.

In HP one of my projects was to have a direct impact on the bottom line of almost a billion dollar. HP being 128 billion dollar and 3.8 lakh people, the scope to save a huge sum was not easy. That is where the structure and methodology really helped. We had to create a method called unified process improvement method UPIM. This was a common language that was needed to be in across HP which could enable all to work and focus in a one single way like the jargons, template, and the frameworks and so on. It was 'one HP way' which made a huge difference to the organization with my dream target of saving of 1.2 billion with 2200 projects that ran with nearly 7000 people. This was a disciplined way. A number of sub-tools were used to consolidate the practices that were followed in each country. The biggest challenge was with people committed to their way of doing. If I am a Leader I have to learn to show each of them how their work is done only in a different format without losing their outputs.

Prathaap, you know that the Gen Y and Z are more tech savvy as team members while some of the Leaders who may be Gen X face struggles in using tools and technology. Can we talk about the challenges and issues along with the beliefs that Leaders have that limits them?

The unwillingness to learn and technology phobia inhibits a number of people in exploring the tools and its usages. Adaption to any new technology is a mindset. It's a belief and the fear of handling it and what will go wrong is the biggest hurdle people should cross. Most people in social sector are working on less resources and so they don't want problems if the tool breaks down. People have made technology as simple and as user friendly as possible while developing the tools. The user interface and user experience has to be simple enough for even a child to use it. The complexity of the game may be high, yet a child is able to get it. That is because a child is fine to fail and learn again. That orientation is the missing link in the adults. Some of the beliefs Leaders hold that makes them not use the tools could be –

- I have only a small team so I don't need any tool and I can manage all tasks myself
- These tools are cumbersome in usage and I have to learn a lot which will only take away more time and so I will do it my own way which has worked for me so far
- Easiest is to write in papers and I can work straight from my mind
- Technology is complicated and I cannot understand these tools easily
- If I use technology others will think I

am trying to show off and stuck to new age gimmicks

- If I use technology even for small things, I will become inefficient in using my brain
- I have never been tech savvy and I cannot connect with people who use technology for everyday living
- I am previous generation and I cannot connect to the technology of Gen Y and Z.
- People fear technology make all transactions impersonal. No, it is all specific, customized, personalized interventions. For example LinkedIn connects to people. Technology in the current times are highly sensitive and it can help develop templates that can be easily and quickly modified to suit the purpose.
- The understanding of structure limited to orderliness is itself an inhibiting factor. Structure should help one to retrieve and identify information faster. It is also called organized chaos. The people may seem unorganized but they will be systematic in getting things done.

The essence of quality is doing the right thing when nobody is watching. When there is no appropriate structure and discipline we don't get the best quality and not able to repeat and re-produce fast. The questions are –

- Am I adding value?
- Am I innovative?
- Am I able to repeat and re-produce?

Speaking about structure and orderliness how does it fit in Research and Innovation?

There is a popular belief that if I am creative and innovative I cannot be bound by structure. There is a belief that lot of structure will not allow my thinking and creativity to happen. Actually in research, there is a structure of how to research and create and innovate. There are a number of methodologies – like Triz – Theory of inventive problem solving. Anything I create can it be repeated, managed and enable others to do it. (Triz is a problem-solving philosophy based on logic, data

and research, rather than on intuition. It draws on the past knowledge and ingenuity to speed up creative problem solving for project teams). This is a structure. When I want my team to add value and innovate and be creative in many ways, I as a Leader also need a structure. Even lean six sigma as a methodology is a structured way of problem solving. There is a framework and it is actually fluid. The software industry is now adopting agile technology. When the customer comes with certain changes in the last minute, the ability to adapt and make the necessary changes within the framework is agile. If the structure does not allow any changes and adaptations, it is an issue. Agile is a framework, a technology, a tool. This can be used across sectors and teams. A leader has to know what is appropriate and when it has to be used. Even like project management, PDCA, foundation of ISO, and so on are all different discipline methodologies and tools present which puts a structure to the thoughts and a process to actions undertaken.

Social organizations to collect research data may follow CUIKA, (Collect data, make it Usable, data should have Integrity and both giver and receiver should have Knowledge of that data, finally data should be Actionable). Integrity will be measured by ROAR- Reliable, Objective, Accurate, Relevant. This is a paper pen model structuring data collection. But this will also bring process systemization too. Once the data is collected, the analysis has several tools, from excel to SPSS to JMP to many others that can be used.

Prathap's life has been one that is filled with immense learning, experience & exposure. He went to win the 'Best Cadet of Indian Air Force', under the National Cadet Corps and represented his country globally at a very young age. Tell me, since when are you so structured? What difference structure plays in military and civilian space? You have seen both.

I learnt structure through scouts and guides. My grandfather was a living embodiment of effectiveness and

discipline going together. From ironed clothes to how you present yourself to what is spoken to what is not ... I was very rugged and rough as a young boy in the way I was communicating with people but over a period of time a lot of things were learnt. Structure and context sensitivity in communication is critical. How we communicate with least voice and most understood by the others also depends on structure.

Why discipline and structure is highly required in armed forces or defense is because your life is at stake. You cannot have things that can threaten you, others and Nation. You cannot afford to have things not in order. The sense of direction, clarity on why we have to do what we want to do and when, the time factor are very critical. So discipline, structure, order, hierarchy are important and have to be followed. There are no reminders, alarms to follow the routine set of things that are uncompromised. The sequence is very well planned for.

In a civilian life, these are not believed to be similarly critical. So the attitude of "its ok", fine and "chalta hai," if not today- I can do it tomorrow' have come in. But the truth is, we don't know if we have a tomorrow and if we will be alive. But, interestingly education and structure have gone together and all are taught structure during student days. The school curriculum and timelines are all planned. But as soon as they get into the mode of not having this structure and find the freedom they don't want to be abiding on the all things that held them and they completely slacken.

Prathaap embarked also on his entrepreneurial journey. He has been serial entrepreneur, and his social venture PotHoleRaja® -Pothole Management initiative with a vision "To Make Indian Roads Pothole Free and fix any pothole within 3-5 days for safer commute" has catapulted him to a whole new realm altogether. He has been a key note speaker a TEDx speaker sharing his journey of PotHoleRaja® social venture. Being an entrepreneur, how has being tech savvy helped you?

The structure and discipline are the

same whether I am an entrepreneur or an employee. But entrepreneurs put a constraint that they cannot use the business tools, have no metric to monitor or the number of people are not sufficient to collect data and monitor and so on. There are a lot of tools for entrepreneurs, small ERPs which enables them. Eg: Tally for finance management, Zoho, CRM, book keeping matrix and so on. There are some intranet management for smaller set ups like BITRIX24. There are tools that are available for large as well as small organizations in different versions. I think all my book keeping or financial management, tracking of sales, the tracking of what to do and when to do of business planning, project management have all been through technology. Tracking business cards, keeping in touch, mailing, and social media are all done in few minutes. My decisions are easy with regard to costing and pricing because I get all data of last two years and the graph of how it has moved and the trends. Everything is there in the system and therefore calculations are easy. Even cross verification of information regarding raw material, transport, unloading and loading all add to faster decisions.

While dealing with the Government sector, technology helps in re-planning and knowing the implications easily. Whenever we encounter resistance, data helps in getting the issues to be heard much more easily. Technology also helps in prioritizing and managing uncertainties. One of the easiest way of handling priorities is to have clarity on both long term and short term. Technology and tools will give projections easily.

Well said Prathaap, and thank you for your valuable insights. Can you leave a punchline for our readers?

Life is a structure of birth and death. The journey in between can be enriched with bit of effort to understand the intricate details, structure with focus and discipline. Technology is a path that can add speed and efficiency.

—Dr Kalpana Sampath



Centre for Social Initiative and Management

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.

For more information, please visit our website www.csim.in

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

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Making Inclusivity the Norm



The first blind Chartered Accountant, an IIM graduate, a Padmashree awardee and a National awardee- these are just the beginning of a long list of accomplishments achieved by Samarthanam Trust, one of India's foremost non-profits for persons with disabilities. A CRISIL rated organization, Samarthanam is affiliated to the World Blind Union, has 13 centers across India, one in the US and another in the UK.

A person with disability in only 'disabled' as long as the environment around them caters exclusively to able-bodied people. Our world has still a long way to go in terms of adapting to the needs of its diverse peoples. Organizations like Samarthanam, however, show us the way by enabling highly productive, accomplished individuals with disability to thrive in society.

Accessible Education

Samarthanam's "Barrier-Free Residential School" at Bengaluru, Karnataka caters to children with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities and those from underprivileged backgrounds. Apart from smart classes, audio-visual aids, locomotor aids, assistive devices and arts sessions, the school also has an early intervention programme and a flagship "Guardians of Dream" scholastic awards programme. Samarthanam's upcoming projects at cities like Bengaluru, Mysuru, Ananthapur and Dharwad aim towards

establishing a barrier-free ecosystem with completely accessible infrastructure, with disabilities access education, skill training and residential facilities.

The Higher Education Programme provides financial support for the differently abled as well as the socio-economically challenged, helping them to pursue their dreams. Samarthanam is drafting a proposal to introduce CCC - Competitive Coaching Classes to help the students prepare for competitive exams in the Government, Banking and Insurance Sectors.

Samarthanam's digital libraries in Bengaluru, Chennai, Guntur and Vishakhapatnam are the first of their kind in India. As of today, their inventory boasts of 5137 audio books, 4121 Braille books, 1867 PDF books and 128 books in ePUB format. Alongside the digital library, Samarthanam operates a public library and a mobile library for book-loving children and adults.

The Trust also operates 13 Skilling Centres across India including Bangalore, Ballari, Gadag, Dharwad, Belagavi, Anantapur, Guntur, Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Pune and Kochi. Of the 3580 candidates trained so far, the Trust has had a 64% placement rate. Samarthanam plans to expand its reach to North Eastern states and raise awareness on the skill-development programmes for the disabled.

"Disability is only for those who do not

believe in themselves," says technology advocate Siraveni Bhaskar. Though orthopedically impaired since birth, Bhasker enrolled at Samarthanam after a brief demo on the training module. With the help of Hyderabad LRC skilling programme he secured an internship in a photography business. Being an industrious and hard-working intern, Bhasker proved to be a great assistant and also helped two of his friends from Samarthanam enroll as interns. "Samarthanam helped me become who I am today. I need to give back to the society the same encouragement I received from Samarthanam," says Bhasker.

Breaking the 'access' glass ceiling

Inclusivity is at the very core of Samarthanam's work. "An inclusive attitude needs to be inculcated in people from childhood," says Founder Managing Trustee Mahantesh G Kivadasannavar, adding that "It changes how we as a society view disability. It is the first step towards enabling and empowering people with disabilities." A scholar of English literature and History, a cricketing enthusiast, an avid traveler and motivational speaker, Mahantesh leads by example. When he, along with his childhood friend Late Sugur Paramashivaiah Nagesh, started this Trust in 1997, their collective vision was to create a society free from discrimination, where persons with disabilities are

contributing members, living with dignity and respect. The Trust is today fulfilling that promise through its wide-ranging services that create a positive impact on every aspect of an individual's growth- educational, economic, social and cultural.

Technology is one of the great enablers of these times. "I am certain that the assistive technology will hugely benefit people with disabilities and bring about tremendous positive impact with increased access to assistive services, higher chances of education and employment while reducing healthcare costs, offering opportunities for improved decision making and socioeconomic benefits," says Mahantesh.

Excellence in Sports

Promoting sports and cricket for the blind have been the founding principles of

the organization. Samarthanam students actively participate in a variety of sports and to use the medium of sports to unleash their potential. Prema, a 14-year old student of Samarthanam ID School used to be a restless kid, unable to focus on any one activity for more than a few minutes. She started regular physical activity and eventually rose to being a sports-star. Her concentration levels greatly improved. Today, Prema's parents are proud of her progress. "Learning new languages, traveling and meeting new people has become part of her routine," says Prema's mother.

An ultra-marathon was organized by Samarthanam Trust in which five visually impaired athletes took part. The athletes completed a 155 km run, from Mysuru to Bengaluru, which in itself is a magnificent feat.

Cricket Association for Blind in India (CABI), the sports arm of Samarthanam, is the apex body governing cricket for blind in India and is affiliated to World Blind Cricket Ltd (WBC). CABI has been organizing cricket tours and tournaments since 2010 and working on blind cricket awareness. The fifth ODI World Cup Blind Cricket Championship 2018, was played in UAE and Pakistan, where India beat Pakistan in the finals. The IndusInd Bank Blind Cricket Conclave was held in New Delhi to present the future of blind cricket. More than 150 representatives from various organizations and 80

cricketers participated in the meeting. The inaugural edition of the Nagesh Trophy, named in honor of Late SP Nagesh, Founder of Samarthanam was held at Eden Gardens on February 10, 2019. The Indian Blind Cricket team is the only team to win all the International Championship formats. Blind Cricket has produced marvels like Shekhar Naik, former Captain of Indian Blind Cricket team, who was awarded the Padma Shree and Prakash Jayaramaiah, Vice Captain of Indian Blind Cricket team who received the National Award for the Best Sportsman with Disability.

Building blocks to illustrious careers

"Parisara" the dry and e-waste waste management programme, provides employment opportunities to persons with disabilities. Through its Wellbeing out of Waste (WOW) initiative, Samarthanam Trust reaches out to 35 wards in Bangalore and has recycled around 2.6 lakh tones of dry waste since the project's inception.

"Sunadha" comprises a group of artists with disabilities who perform on various state, national and international platforms. Garnering acclaim, the troupe travels to various countries, delivers performances and promotes inclusivity in the field of classic Indian arts. Veerabhadra joined Sunadha in 2012. This offered him an opportunity to identify himself as a disabled artist. He underwent a three-month soft-skills and computer training

course to improve his chances of employability. He is also the music teacher at Samarthanam where he helps out primary school students learn music.

A shelter for women in distress under the project "Swadhara", a working women's hostel in Bengaluru, supported by the Karnataka government's meal scheme "Vidyaprasad", both provide safe spaces for women who have undergone a plethora of challenges.

Kusuma, a visually challenged accountant hailing from an impoverished family in Kanagapura, beat several odds to get the job of her dreams. She lost her father early and was forced to give up a hard-earned job at an FMCG company. Chancing upon an advertisement in "Prajavani" a local Kannada daily, she learnt about Samarthanam's six-month LRC/Nasscom training programme. She joined the programme in 2018, where she received training in spoken English, computer skills and e-commerce, among other things. Her hard work and dedication finally paid off in January of 2019, as she landed a job at Accenture through the Samarthanam Placement Cell. Apart from her day-job, she also pursues her passion for writing by regularly expressing her thoughts on Prajavani. She hopes to be a chartered accountant in the years to come.

Every disabled person is employable

Samarthanam provides a disabled-friendly working environment for all staff.

Employee welfare is pivotal and services like health check-ups, eye and dental camps, yoga sessions, health awareness programmes, blood donation and health insurance schemes focus on the well-being of the team. The campus premises is completely accessible, providing a comfortable working atmosphere to its differently abled employees who constitute 34% of Samarthanam employees.

Samarthanam, draws a large number of volunteers from corporate and educational institutions as well as individuals. Its diverse initiatives garner a massive volunteering crowd from corporates who look forward to contributing to the society as part of their CSR.

Acknowledging Samarthanam's efforts towards building an inclusive society, the organization was honored with National Award thrice, CNBC TV18 India Business Leader Award, CavinKare Ability Award for Eminence, NASSCOM Social Innovation award, NDTV Spirit of Sports Award, Aryabhata International Award and many more. Samarthanam is one of the few non-profit organizations to receive Special UN Consultative Status in 2015.

By the year 2020, Samarthanam Trust expects to support 100,000 people with disabilities, a massive number by any measure.

—Archanaa Ramesh

A fresh shot at life, after jail

How a cup of coffee can give youth offenders a chance to get their lives on the right track.



Sahabat Kapas works with juveniles in prison, offering legal advice and counselling sessions. Recognising their struggle to rehabilitate into society after prison, Sahabat Kapas has started a new programme to teach barista skills to released juveniles.

The smell of coffee wafts through the air as Humam serves his first customers of the day. For them, this is just their morning cup of coffee, but for Humam this cup of coffee is a chance for a new beginning.

Humam's voice is soft but his words are thoughtful. He occasionally giggles as he tells his story and it's hard to imagine that this 18-year-old has served a two-year jail sentence.

It was in a youth prison in Kutoarjo, Central Java where Humam met Dian Sasmita, who planted the seeds of his fresh start.

Dian started Sahabat Kapas in 2009 to ensure that youth serving jail terms have a safe place to talk and to express their feelings, after realising there were no counselling options available to them.

Having gone through her own share of trouble as a teenager, she understood the circumstances and situations that could lead youths into a life of crime and its resulting consequences.

"Everybody has a bad past. I myself have a bad past. When I was a teenager, I was naughty. But my parents supported

me throughout my transition to become a better person," says Dian.

"Humam and his friends are less fortunate teenagers. They don't have parental affection. And then, because of the 'not-so-good' influence from their environment, they got carried away and did some bad things that ended with a prison sentence."

The importance of family guidance and acceptance during and after a prison term is a point that Dian emphasises. "For the past five years, we've been focusing on the juveniles that are placed in the prison. And we discovered a fact that 100 percent of them came from a less ideal family life, or have been victims of abuse."

Many of the youth serve their whole sentence without seeing their parents even once, leading to psychological problems, depression and a fear of what the future would hold for them. Their struggles continue even after their release. Ex-offenders face discrimination when seeking employment, and a lack of opportunities can drive some to turn back to crime, and

back in jail.

This situation is made worse when youth are rejected by their families.

Realising that many of the youth are at a loss after their release, Dian started the Gerobak Kopi Onjel (Bahasa Indonesia for "Onjel Coffee Wagon") programme. Humam and two other youths are their first students.

The first stage of the programme provides juveniles with professional barista training and an internship in a coffee shop. Partnering Sahabat Kapas is Studio Kopi Ndaleme Eyang, which shared their knowledge of everything related to coffee - from how different coffee beans taste, how to brew the perfect cup, to the ins and outs of managing a coffee business.

Humam shares that he first found the coffee very bitter, but as he learnt more his tastes changed. "It is nicer when you drink coffee from the real bean. It is sweet, you don't need sugar."

After a three-month internship, students move on to the programme's second stage, where they are provided with a cycle wagon (affectionately

referred to as Kayuhan Amal or "Peddling for Charity") to be used as a mobile coffee shop, allowing them to sell coffee at different events.

Through these new skills, Dian hopes to help ex-offenders become financially independent and able to stand on their own feet, with or without the support of their families.

"The only hope that this programme has, is that these teenagers won't be confused anymore when they are freed, or about what they're going to do when they're out," she says.

But the impact on Humam's life goes far beyond financial impact: "I think, the thing that can help me feel confident is the duty that was given to me. It makes me believe in myself more. I have become more motivated in living my life and not making it worse."

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

Making Impossible Possible

Diya Foundation was started in 1999 as a vocational training centre for adults with intellectual challenges from the heart of a passionate individual, Maria Santamaria lovingly called as Sarah.

Seeing is Believing. Holding on to that phrase I stepped into Diya in Kalyan Nagar at Bengaluru, my mind as a clean state. I was welcomed by Melanie, a young girl wearing a red sweater who was seated poised and composed. Diya gave a sense of belonging to anyone who entered the building. Everyone was busy as a bee engaged in genuineness and passion with the work they were assigned to. It was either paper bag making or candle making or chocolate making or jewellery making; I was directly led to a classroom of students who were eagerly waiting for their psychologist to start the session. I met shy smiles and eager eyes in that room, while the trainer took them through a lesson on emotions through role plays which helped them unveil their hidden feelings. Through some funny moments and innocent conversations, I made my way again to other spaces of Diya.

Diya Foundation was started in 1999 as a vocational training centre for adults with intellectual challenges from the heart of a passionate individual, Maria Santamaria lovingly called as Sarah. When she started Diya Foundation in the basement of a church with 3 adults with intellectual disabilities, she had no clue as to what would unfold in the future.

While most are unaware of the employment potential of intellectually challenged, Diya Foundation strives to enhance self-awareness, build self-esteem and independence of these individuals by helping them develop their potential to engage in productive work. By doing this, they enrich the quality of life and bring dignity to adults with intellectual challenges.

Sarah's commitment and determination took Diya Foundation and the team to a whole new level. The organisation now stands tall with 45 adults with intellectual disabilities, all of them confidently making an impact in this world that would have otherwise marked them unproductive.

In the year 2013, Diya Innovations came into existence. Their students are into making a variety of corporate and individual gifting options - chocolate, candles, a line of household linen, decorative lighting options, interesting crafts from recycled paper, bottles, etc. Apart from production and packaging, training is also provided in data entry, screen printing, housekeeping, hospitality, office assistant, and retail sales.

I was lucky to have met them all as they eagerly awaited their dance trainer to come and teach them some moves. They were enthusiastically learning dance to showcase for an upcoming event. Tony, one of the students showed me his expertise in Photoshop and their trainer Jerusha was kind enough to take me around and show different activities at Diya Foundation.



Sarah showed me how one of her student updates her about her culinary skills at home through WhatsApp. Sarah had many stories to tell about each one of her students and their remarkable transformations at Diya. She is exceptionally proud of her students and believes their dreams will come true. Mark, she says, takes time to comprehend verbal instructions well, but he is exceptionally good at tasks performing them with such precision and care, if you can show him how to do them.

I met volunteers who have been with Diya for more than a decade and selflessly teaching them stitching and other life skills. "These beautiful souls don't grumble about anything unlike us," says a volunteer adding that- "They love what they do and do it with all attention and commitment. That makes me want to train them."

Suman John, Co-founder at Diya Innovations led me through the process of how each product is crafted beautifully at Diya Innovations and how important it is to stay unique with what they do. "It's beautiful to see the end products at Diya and how innovative they get every time. Catering to the requirements of corporates is challenging, but it only gets better every time with the deep dedication of these gifted individuals. Over 100+

While most are unaware of the employment potential of intellectually challenged, Diya Foundation strives to enhance self-awareness, build self-esteem and independence of these individuals by helping them develop their potential to engage in productive work.

companies (Cisco, Toyota, Myntra, MTR) have been supporting Diya in showcasing the work of the disabled through gifting Diya's products to their employees and clients," says Suman.

Students are also trained in gardening, cooking and other activities that will make them independent. Many of them are also offered job placement placed in companies. "There is a lot of stigma around how adults with intellectual challenges can attain nothing and will remain to be a burden to their caretakers. Diya Foundation is here to flip that stigma and tell the world that there is a

lot of things they can do. Acceptance and awareness come first," says Sarah.

While Sarah narrates each person's story to me, I can see the sparkle in her eyes. I can see the passion driving her to do more for them. I strolled through each door to see only laughter, fun, commitment, friendship and much more. Like Sarah said, there are little things that they cherish - a simple step, a mere activity, a simple pleasure of attaining a milestone. These little things are the bundle of joy they keep close to their hearts.

While I sat at Diya contemplating, Mohan, one of the students came to me smiling and asked me to come see how neatly he folds the paper for the gift bags and insisted that I take his picture while at work. Then he went to his other friend Harsha, who was too shy for the photo, but still came as his friend kept insisting. It was beautiful to see how friendships bonded them.

During various activities these students undertook, may it be the dance, the paper bag making, the computer class, the role plays, there was immense peer support that kindled a sense of confidence in them making them want to achieve the unachievable. Heading back home, I thought- there are miracles and then there is Diya!

—Angela Anish

Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

Dr. Pande of Indore is on a visit here. He asked leave of Bhagavan to ask questions so that his doubts might be cleared. He wanted to be shown a practical way to realise the Self.

M.: A man was blindfolded and left in the woods. He then enquired of the way to Gandhara from each one he met on the way until he finally reached it. So also all the ways lead to Self-Realisation. They are aids to the common goal.

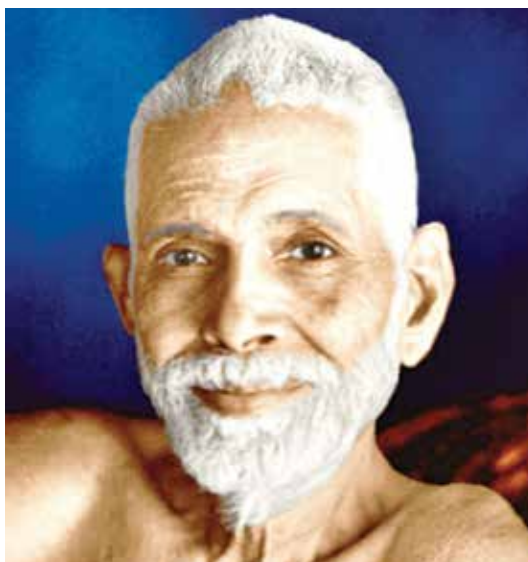
D.: Dhyana will be easy if there is a pratikam (symbol). But the enquiry into the Self does not show any pratikam.

M.: You admit the existence of the Self. Do you point to the pratikam (symbol) and say that it is the Self? Maybe you think the body is the Self. But consider your deep sleep. You do exist then. What is the pratikam there? So the Self can be realised without pratikam.

D.: Quite true. I see the force of the words. But yet are not mantras, etc., helpful?

M.: They are helpful. What is mantra? You are thinking of the simple sounds of the mantra. Repetition of the same excludes all other thoughts. The single thought of the mantra japa remains. That too drops away giving place to the Infinite Self, which is the mantra itself.

Mantra, dhyana, bhakti, etc., are all aids and finally



lead to Swarupa, the Self, which is they themselves.

After a few minutes Maharshi continued:

Everyone is the Self, indeed infinite. Yet each one mistakes the body for the Self. To know anything, illumination is necessary. Such illuminating agency can only be in the form of light which is however lighting the physical light and darkness. So then that other Light lies beyond the apparent light and darkness. It is itself neither light nor darkness but is said to be Light because It illumines both. It is also Infinite and remains as Consciousness. Consciousness

is the Self of which everyone is aware. No one is away from the Self. So each one is Self-realised. Yet what a mystery that no one knows this fundamental fact, and desires to realise the Self?

This ignorance is due to the mistaking of the body for the Self. Realisation now consists in getting rid of this false idea that one is not realised. Realisation is not anything newly got. It must be already there in order that it may be permanent. Otherwise Realisation is not worth attempting.

After the false notion 'I-am-the-body' or 'I have not realised' is removed, Supreme Consciousness or the Self alone is left over, which is however called Realisation in the present state of knowledge.

However, the truth is that Realisation is eternal and already there, here and now.

Finally, Realisation amounts to elimination of ignorance and nothing more or less.

D.: My profession requires my stay in my place. I cannot remain in the vicinity of sadhus. Can I have realisation even in the absence of sat sanga as necessitated by my circumstances?

M.: Sat is aham pratyaya saram = the Self of selves. The sadhu is that Self of selves. He is immanent in all. Can anyone remain without the Self? No. So no one is away from sat sanga.

—Source: Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi

Dependency



The doctor bent over the lifeless figure in bed. Then he straightened up and said, "I am sorry to say that your husband is no more, my dear."

A feeble sound of protest came from the lifeless figure in bed: "No, I am still alive."

"Hold your tongue," said the woman. "The doctor knows better than you."

 Explicit Learning

- A. We have been conditioned to believe in the experts' opinion, rather than the reality.
- B. Experts need not be right always.
- C. We tend to go by experts' opinion, rather than by facts.

 Introspective Learning

- A. What is an expert?
- B. In the process of my depending on experts, do I miss the reality at times?
- C. Do I question experts? If not, why?

GIVING SOCIAL VALUE A MANDATE TO FLOURISH

Over the last couple of months, I have had the pleasure of speaking at several events where ‘social value’ featured strongly on the agenda.

In Liverpool, the Social Audit Network Annual Conference examined how social accounting can support civil society organisations to tackle poverty....

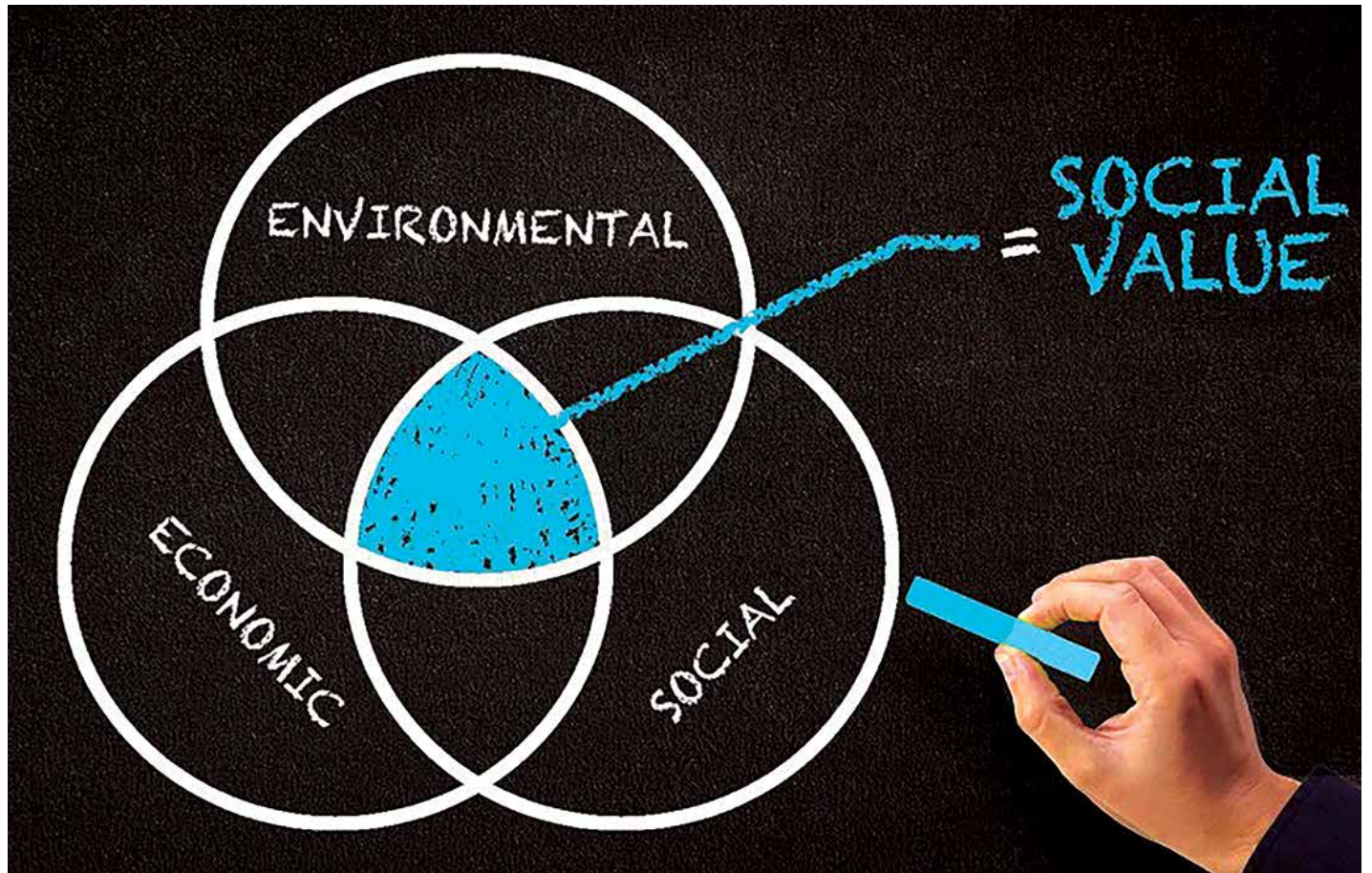
In Edinburgh, at an event convened by Community Enterprise, social and community enterprise organisations debated the changing practice of social impact measurement....

In Manchester, the Greater Manchester Social Enterprise Network launched a strategic vision which will mean that these organisations will need to better understand and ‘manage’ their social value....

The following week, again in Manchester, the 2-day National Social Value Conference brought together policy-makers, civil society organisations, business sector and public sector in a ‘social value fest’ so intense that I was starting to feel overwhelmed with the possibilities which social value could bring in our uncertain world.

I had been asked to talk at the Manchester National Social Value Conference about my work in Salford over the last 8 years and draw some conclusions and top tips for those who are new to ‘social value’. Looking back through the many documents and presentations that I have on this subject, there are some clear pointers towards success.

- Take control of social impact – better understand the difference (or impact) that your whole organisation can make using ‘social value’ as an approach. Talk to staff, Board, service users, funders and the wider community and understand what is important to them (but don’t just align the measurement around the funders, measure what matters to you and all your stakeholders).
- Believe in values – having strong organisational values, such as equality of opportunity, honesty, accountability, fairness, etc, makes achieving social value so much easier because people care and want something positive to happen and they can see the benefit rather than being driven by a blind need to comply with procurement law.
- Be a leader – there can be a feeling that ‘leaders’ are CEOs, politicians, campaigners... but to maximise social value, everyone can be a leader. From the smallest community group to the largest multi-national organisation, the social value movement needs leaders at all levels to make good things happen.
- [I have recently been introduced



While most are unaware of the employment potential of intellectually challenged, Diya Foundation strives to enhance self-awareness, build self-esteem and independence of these individuals by helping

to colleagues from Park Run where volunteers lead increasingly popular events which are both breathing life back into our public parks and having a huge population health benefit.]

- Work with others to create partnerships and alliances – this is where Salford has had such a success. Social value is not seen as just a feature of public sector procurement, but an intrinsic element of what they do, and this has been embraced by all sectors. The 10% Better Campaign identified 11 target outcome measures for social value in Salford, with the public, business and VCSE sectors all working together to create a greater collective impact. Having many organisations involved increases momentum and confidence – Salford really believes in social value!
- Give social value the space and mandate to flourish – above all, social value is something which shouldn’t need express permission... and this became a key milestone for Salford when the City Mayor embraced social value, asking about it in large-scale procurement, in planning and development, and from the Council itself. Once the Chief Financial Officers of the Council

and the Clinical Commissioning Group had embedded social value in their medium-term financial planning, it gained significant credibility. Now social value is an essential part of grant-giving, commissioning, local strategy and the way a huge number of key organisations do business in Salford.

As a footnote, returning to social accounting and audit, it is an undeniable fact that funders and financial people need accountability from their ‘investees. For all that Salford is doing to create a ‘social movement’ around social value, focussing on the issues, not the measurement, and being able to understand, monitor and report on the difference that social value can make will be critical to its success in the longer term.

The Social Audit Network will continue to campaign for better accountability from social economy organisations and Salford City Council has shown the way by publishing the first local authority Social Impact Report which has taken social accounting theory to report on supply chain impact and its contribution towards the 10% Better Campaign.

In Salford, we have the mandate, and we are indeed flourishing!

—Anne Lythgoe
Social Audit Network
www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk

“By doing charity, you may lose money, but it comes back.”

Dr. Mohan Rajan shares with Marie Banu the reason for increased need for eye health care.

Dr. Mohan Rajan, is a renowned ophthalmologist in Chennai. He completed his MNAMS in Ophthalmology at the National Academy of Medical Science, 1998 and pursued DNB, DO Ophthalmology from Sankara Nethralaya in 1987.

An accomplished eye surgeon, he has restored the sense of sight to thousands of visually challenged people across the country. He is currently the Medical Director and Founder of Rajan Eye care hospital Private limited in Chennai. He is also the Managing Trustee of the Chennai Vision Charitable Trust.

Dr Mohan is the recipient of Best Doctor Award from the Government of Tamil Nadu for the services rendered to physically disabled people in 2008; Rotaract – Paul Harris Fellow from Rotary International in 1997. He has also received The Euro Times Award for Surgical excellence in 2008 and Achievement Award from American Academy of Ophthalmology in 2015.

In an exclusive interview, Dr. Mohan Rajan shares with Marie Banu the reason for increased need for eye health care.

About your interest in ophthalmology?

Ophthalmology runs in my blood. My grandfather was highly trained in Ophthalmology, my father Late Dr. Rajan was a Professor in Ophthalmology in Government Eye Hospital – the world’s second oldest eye hospital. From the age of 10, I was assisting my father in cataract surgery.

In 1985, we started Rajan Eye care hospital with an aim to give quality treatment irrespective of caste, creed, culture, region or social status.

My wife is also an ophthalmic surgeon and both my daughters are also Ophthalmologists.

Is the change in lifestyle affecting eye health of present day children?

This is an important issue which I am trying to address in all forums. One in every five children are wearing spectacles. There has been an increase in myopia among children from 6 percent in 2007 to 15 to 20 percent today. In Singapore, the situation is worse where there has been 20 to 30 percent increase in myopia among children. This is because they have strong academic oriented programmes.

About 20 years ago, children were exposed to outdoor activities and there is a chemical called dopamine in sunlight that prevents myopia. Today, children are mostly in air-conditioned rooms

playing video games. They are glued to television sets, or mobile phones and tablets. They eat fast food which has less Vitamin A.

Can you tell us about Netra Vahana project?

The biggest problem in today’s villages is poverty and along with that is the issue of blindness. Cataract is a major cause of blindness where there are 13 to 15 million people in our country being affected.

Now, diabetic retinopathy is another issue of concern as India is soon going to be the Diabetic capital of the world. It is expected that by 2025, 150 to 200 million people will become diabetic and 25 to 30 percent of this segment will have diabetic retinopathy.

Under the Chennai Vision Charitable Trust, the philanthropic arm of Rajan Eye Care Hospital, we run a Netra Vahana project. Cognizant Foundation has supported this project, which is the first of its kind in India. We conduct screening for cataract, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and refractive errors; offer free spectacles; and conduct eye screening in rural schools.

We have been able to take tertiary eye care treatment to the doorsteps of rural poor. For example, if a patient has diabetic retinopathy, all the required equipment like Green Laser, Fundus camera, and other equipment are available in the mobile ophthalmic unit which makes it convenient for the ophthalmologists to provide treatment at the camp site itself. This was not possible earlier as we used to bring the patients to the main hospital to offer advanced treatment.

Aftercare is essential for patients who have undergone the cataract surgery as a layer forms behind the lens over a period of time. We use the YAG laser to treat this and such minor surgeries are conducted in the mobile bus itself.

Till date, we have covered more than 500 villages in the State of Tamil Nadu and are now planning to scale out our operations so that we can reach out to more villages.

People think that by doing charity we lose money. But, I would say that it is the other way around. By doing charity, you may lose money, but it comes back. You have to make sure that your expertise and knowledge that you have learnt is given to everybody. My father used to say: “Keep doing the service, God will take care!”

What has been the success of Rajan – Rotary Eye bank?

Corneal blindness is one of the major



problems in our country. Approximately, there are about 3 million people who are blind due to corneal problems. Cornea is like a watch glass, when affected you will not be able to see the time. Similarly, the cornea is a transparent structure. So, when it gets affected with trauma, injury or infection, the cornea becomes white. This is called cornea opacity that blocks the light and the patient is not able to see. In our country we have approximately 2.33 million people who are blind due to corneal disorder. In such cases, we need to do corneal transplant surgeries.

60 percent of corneal blindness occurs below the age of 15 years, which means that you if can eradicate corneal blindness you can eradicate blindness among children to a large extent.

We started the Rajan Eye Bank in 1996 and subsequently got affiliated with Rotary and renamed it as Rotary-Rajan Eye Bank. We conduct free corneal transplant surgeries, mainly focusing on children, and also propagate the message on eye donation.

Cornea procurement is very less, although better than before. When we started the eye bank, we used to get only one pair of eyes in 10 days. Now, we are getting one pair of eyes every day. There are 550 eye banks in our country and all of them put together, we are doing 50,000 to 60,000 corneal transplants in a year.

The fear of eye donation continue in rural areas although considerably lesser

than before. This is because many celebrities have been involved in propagating the message of eye donation. Aishwarya Rai is the ambassador of Eye Bank Association of India, and we have been roping in sports legend Mr. Vijay Amritraj and other leading actors as our sight ambassadors. This has made a huge impact and led to increase in eye donations across the country.

Your message for our readers?

In our country, people are led by superstitions, false beliefs, and fear of donating eyes which we are trying to overcome through education. With 1.2 billion population in our country, we should be able to take care of the treatment of corneal blindness to a large extent.

Sri Lanka exports eyes to 35 different countries as they have surplus eyes. No religion is against eye donation, but no religion other than Buddhism has told that eye donation should be done after one’s lifetime. That’s the reason why we are lagging behind.

There is a National Eye Donation Fortnight which is celebrated every year from 25th of August to the 8th of September. During this period, we promote the eye donation programme and encourage people to pledge their eyes after their lifetime. I request the readers to join this movement.