

Nruthya Bodhini

Musings of an Artiste



Reflecting on
social
entrepreneurship
journey



by
Dr. Kalpana Sampath, PhD

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*Offering to the holy feet of Amma,
Smt. R.N. Saroja, who not only gave birth
to me but gave birth to an evolving dream
and purpose, stood as a backbone to nurture
and grow it, with undying hope, love, and
care which shone forth steady light into
many hearts... I miss you, Amma, in
person, but you live in everything I do. In
this 50th year of my life, I dedicate this story
of Sadhana to you to say 'Thank you' that
can never equal what you did for me through
your life.*





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Prologue

Many of us seek tangible outcomes out of everything we do. Few of us can see the result as what it has made out of us and how every experience transforms us. My life journey, too, has been one such. I have always felt I am yet to achieve in life. But when I meet my friends from school or college, they have encouraged me sharing I have grown so much, and experience has richly contributed to my years. This book has to be seen in that light. I want to convey to my friends when I stand in my 50th year that what we do every day, every moment should contribute to a process of inner growth and maturity that allows us to expand and love the universe.

In the process of visioning, it is often mistaken that tangible achievements and accolades are the symbols of success. We have forgotten perhaps that increasing inner peace, acceptance, humility, and love are also a mark of real success. A journey may begin in one phase and continue into several phases. Artists are richly endowed with getting in touch with themselves quickly, and so are social entrepreneurs. Both, if they know their search is in reality, evolving self, they will leave behind more precious legacies for posterity. Having had a stint in both sectors in life, I have made a humble attempt to weave Sadhana's life journey with social entrepreneurship learning.

The hope that someday for someone this may leave behind a positive, encouraging, inspirational vibe to continue... a 'prerana' to look forward to...

This work will never find its value without the enthusiastic, undying support of Banu, Pinky, Muralidharan, Purvaa, and Nayana. Banu, who seems to have eternal faith in my writing, encouraged me by giving a prime space in CSIM newsletter 'conversations'. Murali has put effort into understanding the essence of Sadhana's story and illustrated all the drawings and cover page. Pinky, my soul sister, has given a serious reading and helped in editing end to end. It is a pure pleasure to have Purvaa, my daughter, read, respond, and edit the writing while also understanding the Sadhana within me. Thank you all for enabling me to complete this.

Enjoy reading... enjoy the journey

Love

Kalpana

We all say art and culture were a part of our existence since the beginning of culture. That is the way our right brain is still in existence haha; also, that is how the cultural nuances are passed on from time to time. But there is not much sharing on what the art brings to life. Biographies, conceptual, experiential frameworks are written, but few are on a reflective note on what the artiste truly got from being with the art. The life education and the values that are instilled through experience into the artiste by learning and living the art are worth a discussion. No doubt over the last 70 years, with the logical brain being in action in schools, acquiring, storing, and retrieving in every exam churning out marks after marks... slowly art has been relegated to extra-curricular activities, and educational institutes have not treated them as part of the primary curriculum. A career in music and/or dance has been seen as a student being a failure in the mainstream, taking up alternative ways to live life, or it is seen as something second grade. But successful artiste who become popular movie stars or great entertainers have always been applauded. It is only for appreciation. But never accepted if a child says I want to be a dancer or an actor. Yet, being with the art is tough and builds as many perspectives into anyone that a mainstream education can do. Here is the story of Sadhana, whose journey with art and her value-based learning that stand her in good stead in all her achievements through life. From the ability to dream, perseverance, teamwork, leadership, let go, integrate, emotional consciousness, decision making, play with numbers... she learned it all, experientially, living each day with the art.

Come, let us join the little 8year old on a Sunday morning playing outside the house all by herself..

“Sadhana, Sadhana! Come inside. How long will you be playing outside? Come and drink up your milk,” shouted Amma in a loud voice as usual. *“Uh! What a disturbance to my little creative drama”,* thought I. It has been an hour of bliss for Sadhana standing near the gate and playing her favorite princess drama. She, as the most beautiful princess ... no no dancing princess, who was the daughter of the greatest king in South Bangalore. Being born in the middle-class family where both parents worked in government clerical jobs, there couldn't have been happier moments than the fantasy of being the princess.

“Appa, why weren't you born as a king? See, if you had been the king, I would have been the princess, and I would have been the best dancing princess. All because of you now, I'm not a princess

but just an ordinary Sadhana”. *“Who says so, my dear, you are always my princess. Tell me, what you will do if you were the princess?”* asked Appa very lovingly. He never got upset with me and would never stop me from dreaming in life. I could tell him I want to be so many things from princess to actress to air hostess. He will just laugh. *“Oh! If I was the princess, I would dance in a big hall, I will make all happy; I will clean up this*



whole area and give a lot of money to all, everyone will be smiling, no pain and all will be friends with me. So nice it will be Appa, what do you say?” He just laughed, but his heart and eyes said, I totally believe my girl will grow up to be someone someday!!

How many of us allow our children to dream, to live in a fantasy that they create and are willing to write their destiny? How many of us will enable them to live their life?

Time passed, and two years later, tragedy struck in Sadhana's life. She lost her most favorite companion, her grandmother all of a sudden. That was the first death experience, and she couldn't simply understand why her grandmother died. She was the only child of a working middle-class family and so doted by the grandmother. Now, no one to take care of her when she came back from school, and on holidays, she felt depressed and lonely. She forgot to smile, play, and withdrew falling sick with running nose and fever. Then, one day a neighbor mentioned to Sadhana's mother that her daughter is going to an Indian classical dance class nearby. It is a new class, and the teacher is an accomplished certified dancer, a young bride, who has relocated from Chennai to Bangalore after marriage. That night Amma couldn't sleep. She thought it was the best idea that she could find to get Sadhana back to being the cheerful, lively, dreamy girl.

“Amma, where are we going? Tell me,” pestered Sadhana. *“Tell me, tell me, tell me.”* *“You are joining a dance class, where Revathi is going.”* *“But Revathi said I am so chubby I won't be able to dance at all?”* Sadhana asked, puzzled. *“Don't make your own assumptions. Let us first go and try out for some days. There is always a way out for everything we want to do. Maybe you will become thin because you will dance,”* Amma curtly replied, not wanting to talk much. She decidedly said, *“Look here, I have spoken to the teacher. After school, you will go to dance class and be there until 5.30pm, and I return back home from the office. That way you will not need to be alone, and you will be safe”.* Amma looked like she had solved a problem.

Assumptions and Conclusions rule our life, and we are not ready to explore with absolute openness. For every problem on earth, there is a solution. Also, the problem itself may hold a pathway for learning and, thereby, resolution. How much do I explore?

Well, that is how Sadhana landed up in the dance school. Not about dance, but to be engaged, forget the pain of losing the grandmother, and having a place to stay till her mom was back.

Strange are ways of life. It seems like a logical solution, but it is predestined in the web of life, with a hidden hub for an innumerable amount of relationships to connect, learnings to be collected, and purpose to blossom one day. How many of us think every experience has a connection to life purpose?



That Thai tha ha- Dhit thai tha ha
Thai thai didi thai – Thai tai didi thai...

The sound of feet tapping and teacher giving the rhythm; thus, Sadhana entered the dance school along with her mom. Her Mom spoke to the teacher and got her admitted into the class. The classes were to be held on every alternate day, about 3 to 4 times a week, in the evening.

“Come straight from school to class and stay here after the class. I will pick you on the way from the office,” told her mom, hoping she had put Sadhana in a safe place. *“God, I know no one here, how do I stay? Oh, Grandma, why did you leave me?”* tiny tears formed in the corner of her eyes, not daring to fall down.

The walk back home was paradoxical. The tiny anxious hand of Sadhana was held by the relieved, confident grasp of the mom. There was silence. For both the mother and daughter, there was much talking in the head with no sound outside.



The first three classes for Sadhana were exciting. One mind said, she can do it, but the other doubted. What if the words of Revathi come true that plump people cannot dance?

How much we get influenced by others, especially if they are our best friends!!! Many unfounded fears while starting something anew, or make a change emerge from the cautious advice given by well-wishers and friends.

Every new space is a place to be explored. Similarly, for the inquisitive little Sadhana, this was a new place, and she wanted to know more than just the dance. After the first three classes of sticking to only one room until her mother arrived, she slowly got up one day to explore the rest of the house. In the adjacent room, she found an elderly gentleman reading a paper and relaxing. He did not even lift his eyes from the article. She saw a kitchen and a Pooja room typical of South Indian houses. She felt a lot familiar with the smell emanating from the dosa on the Tava. Her teacher was busy making them. She moved on to a half-open room and slowly peeped in. Oh! The first thing that caught her eye was the full grey hair atop an old lady's head. She recognized it was an elderly lady sitting on the bed, knitting a sweater with a ball of wool next to her. She heard the tiny footsteps and looked up straight into Sadhana's eyes. A little smile curved the edges of her old pink lips and, at the same time, a tiny firework of joy light up in Sadhana's heart! Oh, a Grandma here also!!

Whether it is a new idea or a new place or a new person, our eyes seek familiarity first. It's a natural process of finding comfort. Leaving the comfort zone is not easy, whatever the age or gender. But great inventions, innovations, and changes had happened only when they came out of their comfort zone. Social entrepreneurship is in itself a movement out of comfort zone from me, myself towards me, the world around. How much do I see the unseen in every new situation? Whether it is a new idea or new place or new person, our eyes seeks for familiarity first. It's a natural process of seeking comfort. Leaving the comfort zone

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“Come in, my child” softly spoke Rukmini Amma fondly called Rukkamma. Her smile and assuring eyes were very inviting. “Have you come to learn dance”? Sadhana wondered what to say, “Have I come to learn dance or stay here till Amma comes back from office”? Deciding what best to say, she said, “Yes, I have come to learn dance.” Feeling a bit guilty, she quickly added, “But, you know there is no one to take care of me after school, and I am here till my mom comes back from work.” With tiny tears in the corner of eyes, she added, “my grandmom died recently.”

With grey wisdom in plenty, Rukmini Amma grasped the situation immediately and stretching out her hand, she lightly touched Sadhana's little fingers, and said, *“Oh, that's sad. But I am also your Grandmom, and you can stay with me. So don't feel bad. You come sit with me after class, and we will talk till your mom comes to pick you”*. Immediately, Sadhana jumped onto the bed and sat next to her confidently.

“So, do you like dancing” asked Rukkamma. Lost in thought, Sadhana answered, “I do, but maybe I can't dance.” “Why” smiled Rukkamma. Hesitantly, Sadhana fumbled, “they say I am a plump girl and can't dance.” “Oh, that's all? The dancing will easily eat away your plumpness if you dance. Of course, you can, and you just have a healthy baby fat. It will melt if you practice. You are so beautiful, and you will look lovely. So just do it every day”. A wide grin adorned the face, and a flash of twinkle passed on Sadhana's face. The next few years of life in dance class suddenly looked very hopeful and purposeful to Sadhana.

Before the journey of social entrepreneur begins, the idea germinates. When there are familiar encouraging words, stretched hands of support, little volunteering efforts, and listening ears to encourage the person, the inner resolve and strength increase. Most people exploring and wanting to break boundaries actually need that understanding support, be it a silent one or active one, something that says 'you can do it and I know it, and I trust you.' That's the best someone can do for ideas to come out. In the name of caution, at times, we are not aware we dampen most initiatives, be it in children or adults. There is an inner satisfaction we draw from warning people who are daring to step out of their comfort zones.

Sadhana trotted back home with a deep inner satisfaction of having found her grandmom in a different form as well as a hope for being a dancer one day. She sang herself a peppy tune. She was oblivious that a new life had germinated in her, and that will shape her personality to become who she will be at 25. Little did she know that she wasn't just learning to move her hands and legs to rhythm, she was going to actually culture her inner self to a life that only an artist will know.

Social entrepreneurship is not a mere profession. It is a way of life. The lessons and learning from being socially inclined changes not only the life but also the foundational orientations about life.



“Sadhana, Sadhanaaaa, look here – do it once more; why are you standing every now and then?” Girls, come on, let's repeat it two more times”, came the clear instructions from the dance teacher, her voice rising above the mumblings and grumblings of the girls. *“Miss (that's what a teacher's colloquial name is in most schools here in south India)... no, I can't do it again. My legs ache”...* Ignoring the pleadings and smilingly, the teacher began, *“thai ha thai hi thai ha thai hi...”* Sadhana hated this. She felt so helpless. She had to go on; all her friends were already doing it. After another 20 minutes of grueling time, she darted to the door wanting to be out of the class and would not stop to listen to anyone especially, the happy friends.

Annoyance, anger, hatred, tears... all into one tiny heart, Sadhana moped home, pulling her aching feet. Surprising, how all the dreams of being a dancer has got flattened like a balloon without air. Every class seemed like a drudgery. *“I am not going any longer to that class, dance wance, this is not for me, this is too much, and I can do so many other things in that time, with this pain I can't study this evening too”...*a string of thoughts juggled in her mind.

“What happened? Why are you so grumpy? Did the teacher scold you?” asked Amma as soon as Sadhana plonked herself on the couch. Sadhana retorted in full anger, *“Don't even talk to me about dance! It's so boring, painful, and too tiring. Same thing again and again... do your steps properly; sit in aramandi; don't see here and there; be serious, one more time, one more time! Whew! I'm not going back there again!* With anxiety, Amma began to convince that everything in life has difficulty, and what comes with difficulty always has joy at the end of it and so on. Sadhana cried loudly, *“Please, please listen, and don't say anything to me now and no forcing me! I don't want to be a dancer, and it's not for me. I have*

decided, and that's it".

It's interesting how new social ideas soar like a hot air balloon and within a few months start plummeting when many realities begin to dawn. A social entrepreneur in good faith begins the journey with enthusiasm and hope. But how long that enthusiasm does last is the question. There is always a honeymoon period, even in being a social entrepreneur. The new idea, exploring new spaces, meeting with new people, all these seem so appealing in the beginning. But as the work starts and it calls for breaking and making an inroad into society, shaking, changing, modifying the beliefs within us as well as in the community, the challenges loom large. It demands the social entrepreneur to be out day-in and day-out, pushing edges to see even a small wedge that can enable movement of the idea. That's when thoughts of comfort zone beckons and the need to run away from the difficulties loom large in mind.



It's Wednesday evening, and Amma decided to come home a bit early from the office and accompany Sadhana to dance class. She knows Sadhana is a stubborn girl and not easy to change her mind. Amma convinced Sadhana to at least have a talk with the teacher before quitting. No point in taking the opposite argument when the opponent is firm and decided. Better to go their way but twist the perspective at the appropriate time!

With total disinterest and helplessness, Sadhana went along with Amma to class. *“Why, my dear, I heard you were crying in the last class. Are you so weak that you can't bear a bit of pain from the less used muscles?”* Rukamma stopped Sadhana and her mom in the hallway as they walked in. *“you should eat well and rest when you go home. Soak your legs in hot water for a while. You'll be fine. All children complain initially, but in a year, they will extend class!! Everyone goes through this, even me, when I walk a bit more, my legs ache. But I don't allow it to dictate me”.* The loving words were soothing for both of them and the teacher. Guarded and armed with excuses, Sadhana immediately had a zillion reasons, *“The thin girls find it easy. But I am a bit plump as my mom says, and it is not easy. Also, I can't study when in pain. So my homework doesn't get completed. Also, how long can I be doing only the steps? And it gets so dark that I don't get time to do anything else in the evening. Maybe I am not born for dance, it's not me. I haven't lost one bit of my weight even after six months”!!*

“Oh, ho, ho, wait, wait! Said the teacher, “I know you want to quit. But so fast? So early? You have so many reasons to stop dancing, do you have one reason you can tell yourself not to quit? All my students, irrespective of how they are, go through a period of aches and pains. Once they pass that bridge, their body accepts the new movements, and then, it is no longer so painful. They begin to integrate into dance as a seamless entity. Every great dancer or sportsperson has gone through pains. No pain, no gain. If you can give yourself and me another two months chance, you'll be fine. You'll never regret this chance you gave yourself. Focus on finding the purpose of holding on to a thousand reasons to quit. So, shall we hold hands now and go upstairs to the class?”

The enchanting personality of Sadhana was that she could never say 'no' to loving words as well as a challenge thrown at her. She looked at her mother's reassuring bright eyes, which shone with

hope and confidence, from where all her life energy was generated and decided to give it one more chance. “Let me cross this bridge,” she said to herself, “and I will treat myself to a chocolate from the little store in front of the class on the way back home.”

Every social entrepreneur stands at the brink of the bridge, wondering how to cross. It calls for perseverance and a little nudge from some trusted friend to stretch a hand and say, don't quit. Be it relationship, social idea, new venture, adventurous task, the honeymoon period is usually short-lived. It is so because initially, everything is at a thought level, and people encourage at the idea level. But when real work begins, the perspective shift and challenges emerge, that will be the test of sustenance of the person as well as the thought. When rewards don't seem tangible or exciting any longer, the path opens long and untrodden, people slowly dissipate in their encouragement, and the question of survival comes in making the mind find 101 reasons to quit and go back to known ways of living. That is time to find one single definite purpose to continue and not to fail self. The real choice to be the master of circumstances begins here!! It's not how well a social entrepreneur started, it's about how well and how far they lasted, that counts.

Sadhana's movement to always find that one definite purpose, to continue before she calls it quits for anything she took up in life, began from this day, making her tread some of the most untrodden difficult paths in work and relationships...



What is life when things just move on in a monotonous manner? Living the life of a social entrepreneur too is not about doing a volunteer service or carrying forth what is already set. It is all about continually finding creative solutions to existing problems at a cause level and eradicating them. In the process, no patchwork will suffice, it may sometimes call for moving the location and understanding the problem. The solution that emerges too will, therefore, be totally different.

Six years had passed, and Sadhana had become a reasonably regular student in the dance class, climbing the senior levels steadily. Three times a week, two hours each class with one-hour dancing and one-hour discussion on life learning had gone by. She had passed the junior grade dance exams in flying colors with over 80%. She was now in 12th grade studying psychology. The teenager with bright shining eyes, long hair, though short and looked well-fed, she had the beauty of life that shown forth in her face when she came jumping enthusiastically into the class. Her four best friends in class were Bindya, Radhu, Mala, and the regularly irregular Seeta. They formed a formidable team sharing great friendship with their Teacher, who was more of a mentor to all of them.

It was the month of June and a Friday evening – *“Girls, I suppose you remember you all qualify to take the Senior Dance Exam this year, and how many of you are willing to work for it? Senior exams will call for writing exams on theory as well as practical performance. Each is for full 100 marks, and we have to do extensive reading in the next ten months. Your practical portions are almost taught, so no problem. Only practice now on. The*

exams will be in May next year." Grumbling was widely heard from students as to a no for the theory papers and studying books for the next ten months – clear disgruntled sounds! The teacher continued, *"Since the theory is written in Kannada here, I can only help you by giving your theory explanations, notes you make in Kannada."* "What?" Coughed Sadhana in shock!

"I can't write an entire paper in Kannada! Can't we write in English?" The teacher said, *"English? No way, most textbooks, and notes are all available only in Kannada, and you hardly have one or*

two in English". Radhu interjected, *"Oh, then*

Sadhana can't apply for this exam. We also have board exams this year". Crestfallen for few seconds, quickly Sadhana rose back jumped up in enthusiasm. *"Aunty, I*

know to read Kannada, and I understand the language. But I can't write fast and



without errors. So, I will read all the books and notes, compiling them, and making notes in English. It will not only help me but also others who will want to write in English in the future from our class. I shall make a copy of the notes and leave them with you". "What shall I do, I hate big books and studying," wailed the lazy Seeta. *"Don't worry, I shall make notes and on Sunday teach you completely. We will learn together".* Thus began Sadhana's story of learning how to do things that leaves behind something more than usual in every work; that leaves behind a documentation for future; and the most useful ability of note-taking! She also learned to articulate all her most in-depth notes from the heart onto paper. She entered the fantastic world of reading and writing.

Similarly, in every social entrepreneurship journey, there is always n+1 options for every problem. The ability to look for solutions that will eradicate the problem is more valuable than solving the problem temporarily or quitting. Every problem has a solution hidden. One has to discover that.

The next ten months saw Sadhana spending every valuable hour she could get over the weekends in City central library, reading historical books on art and culture, Natyasastra, Abinayadarpana, many more, and making notes. She poured over old question papers to list the topics that need to be covered. Interesting, it was also



the board exam time with extra tuitions at college. When asked why she attempts two exams together, she replied, *“I need a tempo, a speed, and I build one when I am pushed to the corner and, therefore, the best come through more easily for me.”* Those days had no computer and only paper and pen, which made the job more robust and longer. Friends found her crazy, but Amma stood by her, willingly be her best confidante for all cribs and gently pressing her aching fingers at night, knowing she has to be the spinal cord of strength when her little one is trying out something beyond her. She patiently sat for hours without complaint, in libraries, reading storybooks till Sadhana finished her studying and writing. They packed their favorite bisibelebath and ate sitting in the steps of the library on weekend afternoons. Their bonding was unique.

“How did you do?” asked Amma as soon as Sadhana emerged from the exam hall. Amma had sat outside with prayers for all three hours. *“Oh, I don't want to think about marks, but I enjoyed writing this paper the most, Amma, I had timed myself 11 minutes per answer precisely; so I was perfect on timing. I do hope I won't fail your hopes on me. You know something, I actually want to continue this studying theory further”,* giggled Sadhana. This was when the actual journey through Natyasastra had begun for her.

In a social work journey where every day would call for embarking on an unknown adventure, the role of a confidante is immeasurable. Someone who believes in you just stands by and is willing to invest their time and energy without a complaint accompanying to places unknown gives immense strength to the mind. They may think they do nothing, but they are the fulcrum that holds all the pieces of the entrepreneur together. Valuing and respecting such soul-friends is the highest honor one can give to them.

“Sadhana, there's a post fixed to your gate,” pointed Seeta, as they came back home in the afternoon. Sadhana, surprised at the cover from the government of Karnataka posting, opened it, and Lo! she had bagged the State Rank! Sadhana felt dizzy, and she never expected this. A 92% in theory paper! Amma had gone out, and so she ran to the dance class holding the letter. She had to see her



teacher, who was like her second mom! The real reward for her efforts had to be shared first with a big hug!

Going into depth and teaching are two remarkable processes that integrate the learning most efficiently. Social entrepreneurship journey is actually a learning- doing- integrating – teaching journey. It is a fulfilling process that emerges out of helping oneself and helping others to help themselves.



Coaching and mentoring happen most of the time on the fly and not necessarily as a separate process. The Guru sometimes appears most unobtrusively and makes a significant difference in our life that is only seen and felt years later.

“Vacation has begun and let us have our classes at 11am every day,” said the Teacher.

“Every day!! NOooohhh,” came the grumbling sounds from the girls in dance class. Smiling, the teacher relented and said, *“Ok, you can have the weekends off.”* *“Why, 11am?”* Sadhana interrupted. She loved reading her storybooks and hanging out with friends in Gandhi Bazar, a market place nearby. 11am was perfect for doing that after her parents had gone to office. *“In the evening, I will start teaching new students. Besides, you are seniors, and I want to teach and choreograph new compositions with you. Also, this year for the annual day show, I want to have you all perform a grand dance drama, and that's going to take a lot of effort, so 11 to 2pm will give us the time to work on it...”*

The change in the timing may have seemed inconsequential, but it gave a totally new perspective to the relationship the teacher and students shared from then on. More than dance, it was the life lessons that Sadhana cherished the most. The one quality that made this possible was Sadhana's ability to take notes from every conversation she had. With practice, she had developed the ability to extract the crucial messages from long lectures and sermons, thus making every experience a learning opportunity.

“What does a relationship mean to you? What's your favorite

emotion to express?” the teacher surprised the girls with a question. “What do you mean?” asked Radhu, puzzled; “Why are you asking this?” Binda questioned.

“ If you haven't thought about what relationships are and you don't know who you are, how will you express yourself through dance? How will you know how to relate to the nayaka (hero) and nayaki (heroine) characters? How will you be true to the composition on stage?” explained the teacher.

Sadhana made a note, *“To do something in the best way possible, I need to know myself first, and I need to identify myself with it.”* “Oh, let's discuss” Secretly rejoicing a break from dancing, the girls sat down to talk. It felt more comfortable to sit and talk than be on the feet after one hour of dancing!! And this became the most interesting part of dance class for Sadhana.

The journey through social entrepreneurship is similar. While there is an agenda to be achieved, there are collectibles throughout the journey. Mentors appear in several forms for those who are ready and willing to learn from life. Unless the social entrepreneur is in touch with him/herself and introspective, the connectivity to social issues remains outside – in. If it has to become inside-out, the social entrepreneur has to build a process of self – enquiry, which is ongoing and evolving. To enable the process of self-enquiry, mentors and coaches appear from various corners. Different perspectives are opened up, and a more in-depth learning process happens. An agile awake mind can identify those opportunities and make the most of them.

No one knew how four hours just passed by every day. Discussions on Indian culture, traditions, love, behavior, marriage, career, values like trust, giving, letting go, greed, jealousy, possessiveness, and so on. Sadhana was totally engaged in connecting to life, and her brain was filled with all these thoughts about life. Dance class turned into a coaching session, 5 days a week. The most exciting part was that this coaching went both ways – the girls got to know themselves, and the teacher understood their refreshing

perspectives. Seetha, who would be in a constant hurry to finish and leave class, rarely joined the bandwagon. Bindya and Sadhana were the most engaged students. The friendship that began through these



conversations grew and lasted over three decades between the girls. For Sadhana, it was the moment when she decided to dedicate her life to understanding people and behavior.

- *“Opportunities knock at the door; grab it when it comes, and don't wait for it to knock again.”*
- *“Where there is a will there is a way; agreeing to attempt is already half done.”*
- *“Love just happens, and it can also be for a person or a profession – it's just a connection to the heart.”*
- *“If I love something, I cannot say I don't love it just because I didn't get him or the thing- Love is love, whenever it is.”*
- *“Every emotion has a place and relevance in life; I first need to know what I feel.”*
- *“Anything done without passion is ordinary; if it has to become extraordinary and stand out, I should merge with it and be willing to lose my identity.”*
- *“Love and bhakti and bhakti is a means to reach the innermost part of the self.”*

...So on went Sadhana's notes out of every discussion they had on the compositions, life, and relationships. When the student is ready, the teacher appears, and the path is made. Every note became an integral



part of Sadhana's existence. They became her beliefs that stood through her decisions and choices in life. She moved on to make behavioral science and people management a part of her doctoral study and training as a profession in the decades that came.

One of the most neglected parts of a social entrepreneur journey is the documentation of the trip and process itself. Note-taking, therefore, is an integral part of a social entrepreneur. The compelling story that the entrepreneur can bring the people who are willing to join hands to stay with the entrepreneur. The learning collected through a lifetime is worthy of making a path for others who are contemplating a similar journey. When life presents itself in the most in-depth form, the notes that emerge are life's learnings that have universality hidden in it.

The art of dancing was not just a form of movement that Sadhana learned. It was an education about life, love, and relationships for her. It made her reflect and connect to her inner voice within. Similarly, the social entrepreneurship journey is all about fulfilling self. While it seems like one is providing help and support to others, we are actually helping ourselves and finding the life fulfillment in addressing those issues that are deep within.



“Coming together is a beginning. Staying together is progress. Working together is success.”- Henry Ford

It is easy to do things by yourself than getting things done. The ability to work in a team and collaborate is integral to social entrepreneurship.

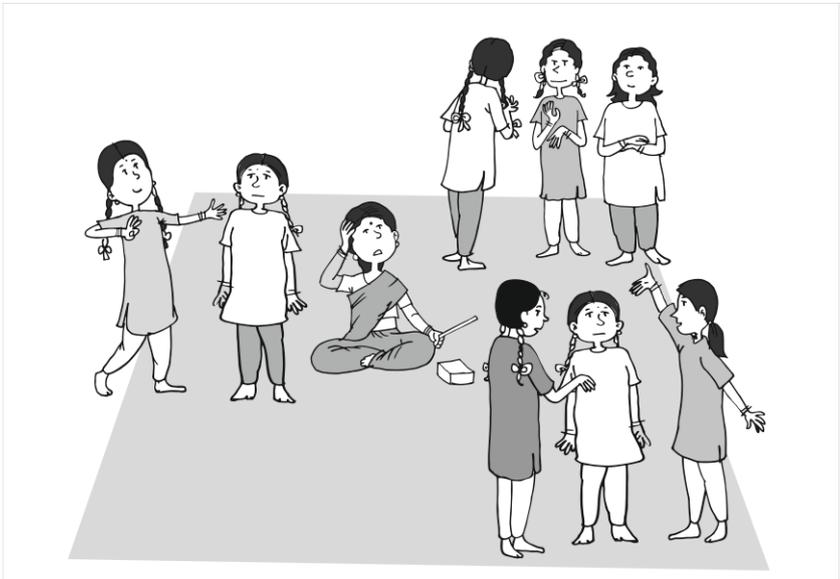
“That’s not fair!! Aunty, I want to be in the introduction dance too!”

“Aunty, I don’t want to do the thillana. I will do the padam instead!”

“Hey, you can’t have only what you want”!

“Oh, I can’t do if I don’t like it. I will ask aunty to change”.

“Aunty, who is playing the role of Krishna? We don’t have enough male dancers in class!!”



From the time the teacher announced the Annual day program she was planning and the parts the students would play, there was a whirlpool of questions, ensuing commotion in class that evening. Excitement, doubt, anxiety, urgency, frustration mixed up feelings were expressed mainly by the girls. The teacher just sat silently, waiting for all the talk to die-down naturally so she could make them all see the value of teamwork.

The teacher raised her voice to address the girls, "May I have silence, please? Listen to me, and I will tell you who can do what item in the program. Then, we can discuss this further. I want you all to know we need to work as a team if this has to be a great show. You will have the option to choose for a few of the performances, but there will also be some that you won't. We have to be fair to all!"

The class suddenly quietened, and the girls sat down next to the teacher, ready to plan. Radhu could not stop murmuring to Mala. Sadhana loved being first and participating in everything and was visibly anxious about missing out on anything. The only person giggling was Bindiya. Seeta, as usual, was regularly irregular, and absent in class. To their dismay, they all had to compromise on their choices of the pieces they wanted to perform. However, to Sadhana's delight, she was chosen to play the role of Krishna. No one could deny her eyes sparkling mischievously that perfectly fit the flirtatious part of Krishna. Bindya, with her grace, was the naturally chosen to play Radha. Sadhana wanted a female role but was also thrilled to play Krishna. She knew secretly that given a chance, she would have played all roles happily. Sadhana's burning need to be a part of it all and give every ounce of energy she had to this show was a reflection of the way she lived her life too.

Teamwork is synonymous to sacrifice, acceptance, and the ability to see the bigger picture and share the vision to go beyond oneself to move towards the goal is equally important. The success and

sustainability of social organizations depend primarily on the extent to which each member of the organization is a team player: While social entrepreneurs may be capable of many things, they need to realize what they need to do and what others can do.

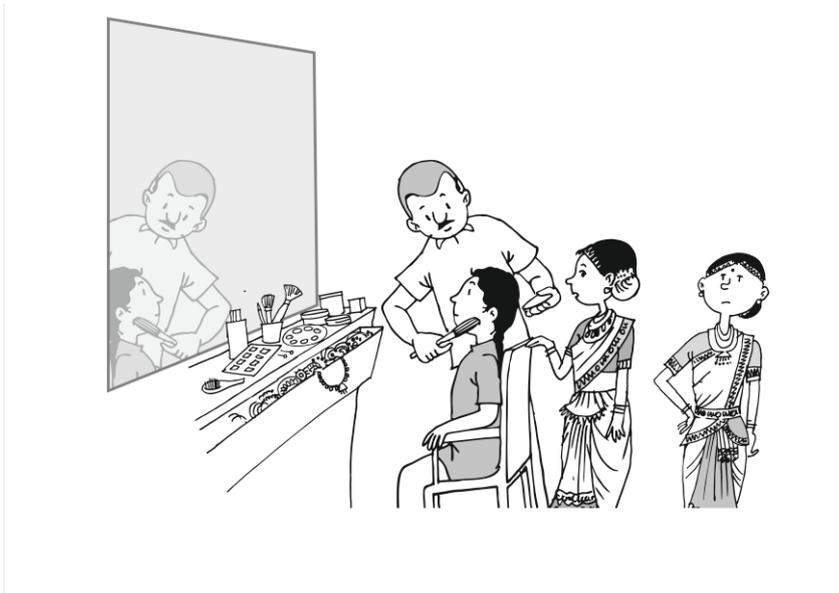
“Aunty, I want to be a part of the program too. How can you leave me out? I am a senior student, too,” argued Seeta, suddenly appearing in class after hearing about the Annual day program planning. *“You have missed a lot of classes Seeta and rehearsals have been going on with the rest for two weeks now,”* justified the teacher. *“No, Aunty, I will certainly be regular henceforth and will surely practice. You know I learn fast, and I am talented. Please, please, let me join in now”.* There were disgruntled sounds from the other girls who thought it was unfair for Seeta to be a part of the program halfway through. The teacher, being kind-hearted and non-assertive, was soon bulldozed into accepting Seeta to participate in the program. This caused the group to have to share their roles and parts with Seeta. Their dissatisfaction caused them to turn a cold shoulder towards Seeta, making it hard for her to learn her pieces in a short period.

There are different kinds of people in every team. Some are sincere hardworking, some want to do the least but are great crowd pullers, or passive onlookers, or over-enthusiastic and willing to do all work or excellent idea generators, and are connectors. They are all essential to make the teamwork. The power of collaboration is experienced the most at the time of action than during planning.

“Why do you want to be ready so early? It's only 3pm, and the program is at 6.30pm!” said Seeta when Sadhana wanted to begin her make-up and dressing. *“Someone has to begin so that all can complete their makeup before 5pm... also, if my makeup is done, I have enough time to get my hair done and put on my costume...not to forget my quiet time”.* *“It's too early, and I want to do it much later...also, I don't understand why you have to plan everything all the time! Going to go down to the store and get myself a snack now”.*

“Priorities, Seeta! Priorities! How many times do I have to tell you to just focus on what needs to be done now? Everyone in class will arrive soon, and there will be a lot of commotion and confusion. My mom always told me that it's important to be ready an hour before and sit quite conserving all energy before the stage opens”. “You do it if you want!!!” shouted Seeta and sprinted out of the auditorium. Sadhana had a way of planning everything she had to do, prioritizing them as she worked. This discipline helped her avoid any possible situations in her daily life. Seeta was the opposite; every day presented a new crisis, and she worked to get things done at the last minute. Both thrived on different notes.

Sadhana began her make-up, and being the first one to get it done, the makeup artiste had all the time in the world to do a good job. Slowly girls trickled one by one and began dressing while waiting for their turn in front of the mirror. Fights on who will be next, space in front of the mirror, mothers of the girls comparing notes on life, girls borrowing hairpins and jewelry from each other filled the small green room. Seeta was seen distributing biscuits, chips, and chocolates to other girls, oblivious of the time.



By the time it was 5'o clock, the green room had resembled the mess of a marketplace on a busy day. There was just an hour to go. Seeta had just begun to get dressed, realizing everyone was almost ready. Her waist belt was not found, the girls had used all of the safety pins, no one wants to help her out, and the makeup artist was tired after doing the faces of all the girls in the room over the last 3 hours... *“Oh, Seeta, look at your nose. Why is it red? Oh no! you must've accidentally touched your nose with your hand when the red paint was still wet! Hahaha, she looks like a red nose, Raindeer...Hey, you can do monkey part in Ramayana song!”* jeered the girls, utterly ignorant to the tears in Seeta's eyes. *“Don't pull my hair! Oh, God! You've ruined it!”* They were actually settling old scores with her. The teacher had to step in and give them a good scolding to get them to sit quietly and not mess up their costumes. *“Don't keep fighting, just make sure you're all ready. The program can begin only if everyone is ready and calm. Just sit and meditate for the next 15 minutes”.*

“Where's Sadhana? She is nowhere to be seen!” Bindhya commented, anxiously. Sat Sadhana in the corner behind the stage quietly, meditating for the last 30 minutes. She felt absolutely fresh, ready, and in sync with her body, mind, and soul. She was completely prepared to go on that stage.

The connection between action and meditation is underrated. They are seen as opposites, but actually, the most serious and maximum effect comes when the body, mind, and soul are aligned. One of the best methods of getting the team aligned is to enable them to synergize through meditation. A shared vision, respect for each other's competency, convergence, and acceptance of everyone's contribution makes the best team.



There are several “selves” hidden in every team. Until each of these 'selves' don't totally blossom and connect to the purpose, social entrepreneurial ventures become far-fetched. Most of them take to being a volunteer in a social organization. That seems to be the best proposition because it is usually a short-term commitment - responsibility without the pressure of being accountable and the euphoria of having given something that they wouldn't otherwise or sometimes, merely a different day from the daily tasks. True social entrepreneurship doesn't happen this way. It calls for the integration of purpose and self, and that is the point where the self begins to blossom.

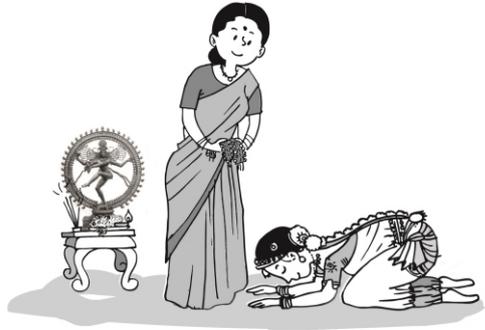
“Sadhana, you are almost ready for Arengetrum, your first solo performance. A couple of months of rigorous practice, and you can do it!” Her teacher enthusiastically patted Sadhana's back. “Oh, will Amma agree to it? Am I truly ready to do it? What if we don't have the money for it right now?” Sadhana contemplated as she walked home from dance class. When she got back, she told her mother what the teacher had said. Amma listened carefully to Sadhana and calmly said, “I know you will do it one day, and I have saved up all my money over the last three years for it. You know, my dear, it's been my dream to see you perform an entire show by yourself.” Sadhana was overwhelmed and touched. “Mom, how are you always prepared and organized? You never cease to amaze me!” Little did Sadhana realize what an impact her mother's actions had on her – she would turn out to be just like her mother, an action-based planner that achieved everything she set out to do in the future.

Sadhana began training rigorously for her Arengetrum. The

teacher choreographed new pieces with two-hour classes every day morning and evening. She was having a hard time learning all of that and keeping up with college – after all, 24 hours never seemed to be enough. Sadhana found alternative ways to stay on top of it all by rehearsing in her mind while riding the bus to college and being ready for class every evening. This also sharpened her memory without her even realizing it. Her mind and body began to synchronize and work together as she rehearsed every moment she got. The regularity increased her ability to focus and aligned her thoughts and feelings. Having to keep the audience entertained through an entire performance by herself pushed Sadhana to integrate the movements with emotions into a seamless form of expression. One morning while she was sipping her mother's filter coffee, Sadhana chirped, *“Amma, I have begun to dream of the dance numbers these days! I have so many new ideas. Every time I am alone, the songs keep playing in my head, and I can express better. I wonder why I never really thought about dance like this so far. I can balance dance and college easily now! It is so fulfilling and enriching.”* Her mother smiled knowingly, hugged her, and said, *“Until dance does not become you, you don't reach the hearts of the audience. There is no point in just reaching their eyes, its the heart that counts, my dear. I am so happy this is happening to you, and I see what happened to music and me is happening to you and dance”.*

The transition from being a volunteer to a social entrepreneur involves single-handedly taking both accountability and responsibility for the society. The shift allows for one to build a bridge from the microcosmos to the macro cosmos. It ignites empathy, resilience, and bonding that turns a dream into reality. The process of this ignition is the real transformation within. To own, adopt, and experience the possibility of possessing an ability to make a difference to others and, therefore, to oneself is what social entrepreneurship is about. This ability is experienced the minute one is willing to leave their comfort zone and move to being on their own and connect to the society and its issues deeply.

Three months flew by quickly – costumes, background score, lights, stage, and invites...whew! It felt like they were planning for a huge Indian wedding. It was also a significant event for the dance



school, and teacher since Sadhana would be the first student in her class to do her Arengetrum. Everything was meticulously planned, and so many tiny hurdles that cropped up were crossed, keeping everything within the tight budget that they had for the event. Finally, it was the D-day. Sadhana's entire family, relatives, and friends supported her with their presence. The auditorium was filled with people known and unknown, invited by her family and friends. Her teacher was gleaming with hope and anticipation and gifted her a new set of dance anklets as her blessing for Sadhana.



“Just meditate, trust all your efforts, and leave the results to God. Don't worry, you will do well,” whispered Amma to a nervous Sadhana. *“This is just the beginning, my dear, and life is large and long ahead. So just do your best!”* Rajam Mami, the knowledgeable elderly violinist, said, blessing her. The performance went on for two and a half hours with a break for chief guest speech and felicitation. Sadhana did her best, and it was a highly commendable performance. Her connection with the inner dance and the blossoming of the self to invoke the art was highly visible through the evening. The audience stayed through the performance and cheered with applause and appreciation.

The taste of appreciation and stage enveloped and overwhelmed Sadhana. Her parents swelled up with pride and love for their little girl. Sadhana had

become a known dancer to all her relatives, friends, and other artists. There was a new identity that had come into her life. This held a higher significance than many other identities that had existed so far. There was a clear sense of transition from



being a dancer to an artist. The outer song had connected itself to the inner song, sowing a seed of purpose in Sadhana's life. All she could tell herself before falling asleep that night was, *“I know what I want to do and what I am born, for now, thank you, God.”* Her mother had seen the connection that was happening to Sadhana. Like every parent who is waiting for the child to find their sense of

purpose and life ahead, Amma had also wanted to see the artist blossom in her daughter one day. That night, Amma and Appa slept with a deep sense of completion and fulfillment. The journey had begun.

There is a time when all of us experience oneness with the universe that throws open the sense of purpose in life. More so is the life of a social entrepreneur: Working alone to make a difference to oneself and others bring a deep connection when both the micro and macro cosmos merge. Being able to identify it, recognize it, and capture it is the most important thing to do. Along with everything else comes the acceleration and brakes too. Being a social agent has two dimensions; the contribution and the joy of taking the path less traveled. Understanding both and what it leaves behind in the social entrepreneur is a significant revelation. Life has its own ways of unfolding such nuances at the most appropriate time. Those who connect will know the happening and recognize the value of the journey more than the lure of popularity.



“Amma, amma, ammaaaaa.... Listen to me... I have something to tell you,”... Sadhana bounced excitedly into the house after dance class. Amma looked up knowingly at her ever-excited enthusiastic, bubbly daughter who was full of life. “Amma, I need to quickly make several applications to the art and culture department and submit them. After my arengetram, they'll give me regular opportunities to perform. The teacher told us to go and meet the officials and apply. See, I made a list of other institutions and forums too. Next week I am going to all these places. God! I am going to be on stage many more times now! You better be ready to leave your job and become my manager!” Amma smiled while she silently prayed for her daughter's enthusiasm to last for the rest of her life. Sadhana skipped to her room, blissfully humming a tune.

When the journey of a social entrepreneur begins, opportunities to intervene in society and its issues and the euphoria of initial successes take over. Initially, every opportunity to showcase your ability becomes essential, and there is a surge of hope that makes the possibilities seem endless. The list goes on, and the journey seems exciting. However, it is vital to grasp and understand that the opportunities are still only ideas that need to be nurtured into reality.

Sadhana wrote out her resume with great gusto, listing her capabilities and competence in the field of dance. She attached photographs from her performances and put it all together in a beautiful folder. She skipped college and went to meet the officers at the art and culture department to submit her applications. However, she was quickly disappointed when she saw the

nonchalant attitude that the department had. *“What is this application? Oh! Dance exponent!! Well, leave it here with me. I will file it.”* The clerk pushed her application aside. Sadhana lingered hesitantly, wondering if she should ask him when she will hear from them. *application? Oh! Dance exponent!! Well, leave it here with me. I will file it.”* The clerk pushed her application aside. Sadhana lingered hesitantly, wondering if she should ask him



when she will hear from them. Sadhana's friend stepped up and asked the question for her. *“Oh! You want to know about stage programs? Well, we already have applications pending from the past couple of years, so we'll get to yours when we can,”* said the clerk, dismissing them. He saw Sadhana's face fall and asked, *“Do you know anyone at the higher official level? If you have a strong recommendation, maybe your application will take some precedence.”* Sadhana's friend quickly added, *“What about merit, Sir?”* He grinned and said, *“You're new to the arts, you will understand.”* Sadhana walked back to the parking lot with a heavy heart. She was beginning to realize the messy world of the art industry, and she had a lurking fear of what was going to come. The

next few days went in making calls and walking into different forums and institutions that promoted dance. The usual well-rehearsed answer was, “Do send in your application. We will get back to you if there is an opportunity”. Both her mother and her teacher weren't surprised when Sadhana shared her concerns. They knew this messy world that Sadhana was just beginning to discover. Six months flew by with no answer or encouragement from the institutes she had applied to.

Similar is the journey of a social entrepreneur: The hype and euphoria in the beginning with the possibility of opportunities are overwhelming. Social media, people, supporters, philanthropists, and bloggers are mere advocates. But everything is serving a need and a cause. The real issue fought is used as a means to ensure their work progresses rather than promote and gain sponsorship to further the cause. For every significant venture, finance and law is vital. If either one of these is lacking, motivation can only last so long. When daily maintenance of the organization becomes an issue, pertinent questions about sustenance begin to arise. There comes a time when the social entrepreneur begins to question the path and possibilities. This is a tough, hurtful phase. Every small opportunity offered seems like an oasis in the middle of the desert.

Sadhana felt desolated. She found tiny opportunities to display her talent at the temple by her house, shows at her college and family functions. One of her elderly neighbors introduced her to forums that had gatherings for religious purposes, where she had a few performances. Still, none of these truly brought out her talent or her competence and didn't challenge her capacity either. They were just 10 to 20 minutes opportunities, which kept Sadhana going - not that they excited her, but it gave her hope for bigger opportunities.

“Who knows if things will ever change?” Sadhana thought to herself as she looked out at the dark night sky. Am I doing what I should be doing? Should I focus on dance as my life path, or should I just make it my hobby and focus on my studies? I am one of the

best students in my class. Academics and communication seems second nature to me. But why am I still yearning for that stage and the happiness I get in being with myself when I dance, as though I am one integrated piece? Why is the studying or the high scores I get in class, the popularity I enjoy, not giving me the same joy? What is my life path? What is my real purpose in life?



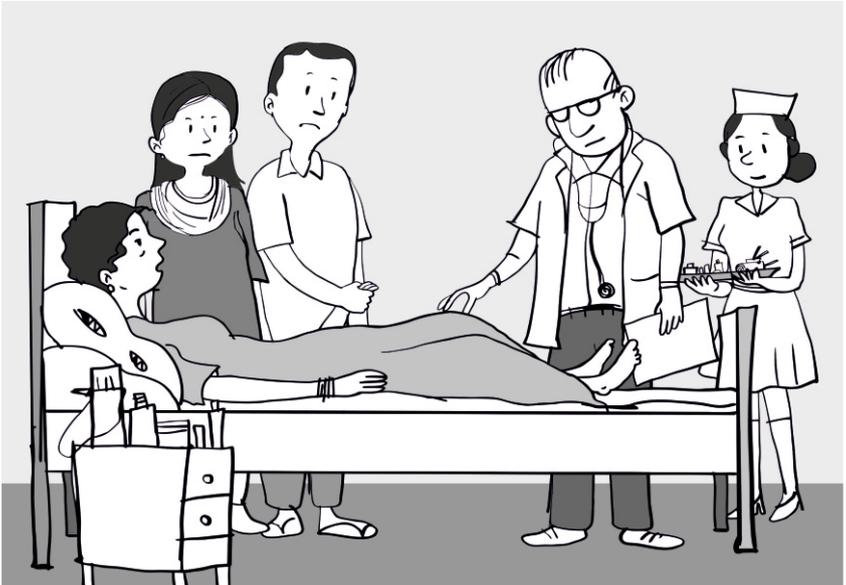
Every social entrepreneur standing at the edge of self-sustainability has this question to answer – what's the life purpose and if the chosen path is genuinely fulfilling the purpose. Though several people are willing to support and appreciate the cause, in reality, it is a lonely journey. Every life is actually a lonely journey that has to answer the question of purpose and align the path and the purpose. There is always the fear of slipping into the comfort of a way that is laid out for you. But that is also precisely the place to hold onto the possibilities you see for yourself and your purpose. Not just hold on, but hold on with an undying hope in your heart. Channel your thoughts to the positive energizing space and move from self-preservation to purpose-driven life.



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

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

Sadhana's life is a complete roller coaster ride. Just when she thinks everything is smooth and going fine, there would be something that happens that puts it into a challenging spin. As Sadhana was figuring out a way into the jungles of the dance



industry, Amma noticed she was getting weaker with rheumatoid arthritis spreading to both knees and hands. Almost 6 months of alternate medicines had only rendered slight relief, and slowly Amma had hit the bed unable to walk. Appa, who had never really managed the house all on his own, was confused completely, and Sadhana was caught in maintaining the home, finances, and her studies. The doctors had advised a one-month treatment for arthritis at the hospital with complete rest till she regains her strength to walk again. Sadhana had to manage her college classes, hospital duty, and also take care of home and food requirements. It was never in her to disappoint anyone or not do her best to see all were happy. With the pressure mounting, the thoughts of furthering her art career had slowly relegated to the background. Her mother had been her backbone completely, and now Sadhana felt very helpless without her mother's support.

"I want to talk to you both," said Appa one evening sitting in the hospital room. *"You both know I have been having serious difficulties at the office working with my Boss. They are even planning to transfer me to a far-away center, and I just can't do the travel, especially when Amma is laid up like this. So I think I will take voluntary retirement and stay home".* *"What! How can we manage the home with all the expenses? Also, Sadhana is so good in her studies that she should be doing her masters in the next two years".* *If you quit now, you won't get a full pension. What will we do?"* screamed Amma agitatedly. *"Not this now,"* murmured Sadhana to herself. She knew her father usually escaped problems than face them, and if anyone can counsel him, it would be she since he trusted her judgments the most. Sadhana gulped a lump of anxiety, choking her throat, and said, *"We will deal with this issue, Appa. Don't worry. You just have another 3 years to go for retirement. We have your good friend Uncle Chandra who can give you the right advice to handle the Boss. I will call him on Sunday for lunch, and we all will discuss. For now, let's wait a bit. Let's get complete medical help for Amma first. Let her come back home*

from the hospital. Pray to your favorite lord Ganesha, and all will be fine”.

Social entrepreneurship is all about facing the challenges yet not giving up the idea that one has begun to execute. The backbone and spinal cord of the team may suddenly leave or fall sick. Priorities for the core team members may change. Managing everything else becomes a priority than pursuing the original idea that they set out for. An organization, be it social or corporate, has its own life cycles. The ups are the time when every idea has to be capitalized. The downs are the time when values have to be strengthened, and a review of the vision takes priority. Every problematic moment comes in life for a purpose, and the chiseling may be very painful, but the result would be long-lasting. Similarly, at the end of this phase, Sadhana had turned out to be someone who could withstand the most difficult moments in life, trusting herself.

Within a week, the monsoon began with heavy rains, and the 45-year-old house started leaking everywhere. A decision was taken that the house needs to be reconstructed in most parts and would cost a significant budget. Sadhana saw that as an excellent strategy to ensure her dad does not leave his job. This pushed her to gather all support from friends and extended family to get the project going from design to completion. The days were too long and the entire day filled with decision making situations and managing people and construction requirements. Just like a thin young leaf shook with the night winds, in the solace and silence of the night, Sadhana found time to cry her heart out and manage to build courage for the following day.

Pray, and you will see miracles happening. Why not go to Infant Jesus church? Make a vow that in nine weeks, your mom will be able to walk on her own. Every Thursday, say the prayer and light a candle at the church. Also, go to Hanuman temple every morning for 48 days and do your prayers...advice from her dance teacher

and friends built a secure anchor for the otherwise pressurized Sadhana. Amongst all the activities, she found time to do her prayers with an undying commitment. The prayers brought her closer to universal consciousness through her intent and resolve to



see through the challenges with success. From then on, God had become her companion and best friend that she can talk to in all her troubles and tribulations through life. The unrelenting commitment that she followed in her prayers instilled a discipline within her to pursue her other activities throughout the day without giving up. She found students to teach dance, do small documentation work, and made some money to tide over her everyday needs.

Lo! Miracles happen. One Thursday, coming straight from church, Sadhana rushed to the hospital, and a surprise awaited her. *“Sadhana, I was just waiting for you. See here, I can walk now, my legs are better! Oh, I am so happy. Our prayers are answered,”*



shrieked her mom excitedly. Sadhana saw her mom walking in the corridor, holding her Dad's hand! *“Mom, you are coming home soon, then.”* Sadhana had a wide grin on her

face and gratitude in her heart as she saw the end of a long winding tunnel.

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



10

Silver lining - Stay focussed but stay foolish

“Stay focused, but stay foolish,” Sadhana whispered to herself in class. *“Whaaat? What did you say?”* Bindya asked, puzzled. *“Oh, nothing. I just motivated myself”.* Sadhana had found a way to talk to herself whenever she needed to remain positive in a challenging environment or situation. This habit pushed her to succeed instead of quitting, enabling her to solve issues and hold onto her relationships. *“Bindya, do you think we are getting anywhere in life? Merely coming to class 4 days a week, practicing, learning new pieces to perform, waiting for our annual performance or tiny shows once in a blue moon...I'm getting frustrated, and I don't think I know what I'm doing anymore.”* Sadhana was thinking out loud, more than expecting Bindya to really answer. *“What do you want to do? What is not happening? I don't get you. Quit thinking so much and practice!”* Bindya dismissed Sadhana with a nod. She was always a cheerful person and didn't want anything to ruin her mood.

Social entrepreneurship is about questioning the status quo. It is all about moving away from any pattern, not enabling growth and change in the direction of betterment. A true social entrepreneur is never afraid to question when there is stagnation, even when the initial idea of the social entrepreneur gets to a dead end. It is not about continuation and sustenance; it is also about evolution. Comfort zones in terms of funding, teams, known spaces, and similarities have to be periodically questioned despite the possibility of arising problems.

“A ship is always safe at the shore, but that is not what it is built for.”

- Albert Einstein

That evening was a significant one. Uncle Kittu was taking a stroll and found Sadhana coming home from the dance class. Uncle Kittu was a loud, loving, cheerful person who was also a connoisseur of music and dance. His was the rustic kind that came from traditional upbringing. *“Hey, Sadhana. Where have you been? I have been thinking of taking you to meet my friend, who is a manager and conducts dance and music tours. Come, let me take you tomorrow and introduce him to you. Be ready by 6pm, and we'll go!”* No questions asked! Many may think it is imposing, but Sadhana loved the way Uncle Kittu took charge of her life. She knew he loved her as his own daughter. Sadhana's eyes twinkled. She hoped for a new beginning, and a silver lining shone in the mundane life she was having taking care of her mother, the house, her college, dance classes...

“Amma, this was a wonderful evening. How exciting to meet so many dancers from many different schools in one place. I never knew Uncle Kittu knew so many people. I am going to be practicing for so many shows and touring with the group!! I made new friends, Amma. I was a bit nervous initially, but they all made me feel at home. Suju, Neetu, Gayatri...I am not sure my teacher will approve of all the tours; but, I have to convince her and take this next step in my career. What do you think?” *“Sadhana, remember that you need to be sincere and honest in whatever you do. If you give your best, the Universe will support you in your efforts. Why do you keep pre-empting the future? Please sleep now. I'm very happy for you, and all will be well—past your bedtime and its late. Go to bed now, goodnight, dear”* Amma kissed her bubbly daughter with deep satisfaction and gently got up to go to her room.

Most people who have been successful in life to tide over challenging moments would say godfathers come in various forms. That is the Universe's way of supporting an idea and a vision. For this to happen, faith is essential; faith that someone is watching out for us and is continually laying down the ground if

we are willing to pave the path. Rationality many a time does not allow faith to find its roots. But most social entrepreneurs are not rational. They are focused, and they are foolish. They are willing to flow and move into new spaces, exploring different paths for their vision.

The next six months were full of action for Sadhana. She made new friends, and most evenings and weekends were spent in rehearsals and unique choreography. She learned many different genres of songs and dances from India. What began as a small role took large chunks of time and energy with expanding possibilities.



Every weekend show led to train and road travel, meeting new people, new audiences, and stage opportunities. Her friendship with new people, Neetu and Suju, grew stronger day by day. Sadhana had never traveled without her family. She saw herself going into small towns and new cities for performances. This also made Amma take over the house, and the kitchen matters much more. Her health improved, seeing Sadhana happy and energetic. Amma got occupied, helping the girls in music and rhythm. Appa never liked Sadhana going out much but could not do more than

silently protest, having two powerful women at home in euphoria all the time.

Slowly, attending dance classes with her teacher reduced and became once a week to catch up with old friends and teachers. Bindya and Radhu didn't bother much, but Seeta was very upset with Sadhana for not spending enough time with her, and Mala had become indifferent to the new things Sadhana brought on the table. *"You have changed a lot, Sadhana. You talk so much, and you are always on the move coming up with so many ideas!"* Bindya said as she patted Sadhana's back. *"Oh! Her newfound friends and ideas are making her tipsy,"* quipped Mala. *"True. Life experiences teach us a lot. I think it is important that I bring all that I learn there to all of you here. That will make this journey more worthy,"* Sadhana answered with hope and enthusiasm. *"I met those girls the other day at your house. I can't stand them. They are all a bunch of arrogant girls and can't dance to save their lives. After being through this traditional rigor, I don't know how you can tolerate their steps. Maybe the lure of the stage and money got the better of you!"* Seetha said, dampening Sadhana's enthusiasm.

Walking back home from class, Sadhana felt very alone. *Why can't we learn from each other? Why are we so judgemental about other people who are doing the same thing, just differently? Why are they rejecting me?"* These thoughts filled Sadhana's mind. She felt she had been forced to make a choice between her



old friends and new ones. She hated it. She never liked to make such choices in relationships. Her heart sank. She stood by the window lost in thoughts till the sunset, and the moon rose.

It is an interesting discovery when you realize how you can't pass learnings from one space to another easily. Be it a social organization or elsewhere, learning from the competitor can only grow you and your organization to the next level. When one person from the group learns it is not easy to pass the learning to others, there is an internal resistance to accept peer-learning since knowledge has somewhere over the years got equated to expertise and supremacy. There seems to be a great joy in reinventing the wheel and proving the beaten path as the best. There's no surprise in having thousands of small social organizations in the country refusing to collaborate in fear of losing their identity. Thoughts on resource utilization is limited to the organization. The country as a whole is not considered at all. This needs serious thought and consideration.



11

Tough lessons and the other side of life

*Chooo...chuk..chuk...*the train trudged from the New Delhi station towards Bangalore. Sadhana suddenly felt heavy and tired. The excitement of roller coaster ride of the previous one week had been too much to take. Now the reality dawned, she had no inclination to talk to anyone but wanted to close her eyes and retreat. Sadhana climbed to the upper berth with her pillow and her diary. She found her best expressions and vent to feelings through pen and paper. Her diary has been her most favorite companion through life. As she sat there silently, the week's events went past her like a flashback.

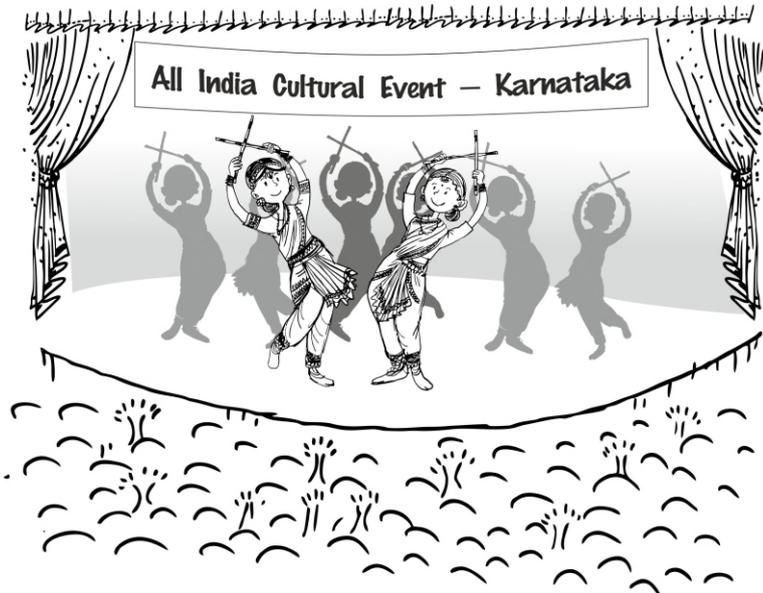
A week back... at home... *“Be careful. Stick to your friends. Eat on time. Do well. I wish I could come with you, but for my legs”*...constant rattling from Amma while Sadhana put the bags outside the front door waiting for the car pick up that took her to the railway station. *“Amma, you're not coming has nothing to do with your legs or ill-health. You also know that moms are not coming with any girls. And I'll be safe. You have to trust me to know what to do. I am already 19!! Come on,”*. However, much Sadhana tried, the annoyance and frustration crept into her voice whenever her mom cribbed about her health.

A group of nearly 18 had left for New Delhi. They were all dancers and were going to represent Karnataka in the All India Cultural Festival. Manager Nagaraja was a firm but friendly person who was in charge of selection, training, and conducting the tour. He was highly networked and connected to political and influential persons in the art field. People strived to keep themselves in his good books all the time so they would get opportunities to perform. He was Uncle Kittu's ex-colleague who had left the

organization to do the Art and Culture Managerial Job full time. His public relations skill, context-sensitivity, and manipulative mind had quickly grown him in the circles as most sought after Manager for art tours.

The kind of middlemen that we meet in all social organizations are highly influential. They want to make the best use of the opportunities as well as ensure service for social cause. But the danger of which way they will turn remains unpredictable. Since they know the multiple and intricate ways for community reach and can turn the tables any which way, they become inevitable to social work. The debate for and against keeping middlemen remains for a long time as an unresolvable issue, especially in our country. But there have been certain commendable efforts in eliminating this layer using technology in the last decade.

By the time the train had reached New Delhi, clear groups and cliques had formed amongst the 18 people. Sadhana, Suju, Neetu, and Gayatri had stuck together. Three dancers who chose to belong to none and were seen in every group liked their role of carrying tales from one group to another.



Rehearsals through the day and programs in various places every evening kept the girls on their toes for over 13 hours a day. Nights were long with continuous chatter. Though with a mediocre start, by the third day Karnataka team had become sought after group amongst other teams. The real finale was on the 6th day, and everyone was looking forward to that. Bitter competition and cold wars were already forming amongst the members of the group. Amongst the dancers, some who were clear on benefits and outcome liked Nagaraja a lot; and some who were seeking straightforwardness and transparency hated him the most. But all wanted to be on stage, and so were willing to be a part of Nagaraja's fraternity.

“Hey, where's my scarf? I can't find it? Oh, no, I also seemed to have lost 100Rs from my purse. I think someone has been stealing things from our bags”, screamed Gayathri as she saw Suju and Sadhana walk into the room. Sadhana calmly said, *“See properly. It will be there in your bag”*. Neetu, with the latest stories always, walked into the room, whispering, *“Hey, girls, many more things are lost, and they all suspect that fair looking girl, short and beautiful, who acts snobbish to be the one who has been stealing. Looks like she is expert in pilfering and loves doing it”*. *“She must be a kleptomaniac, compulsive stealing,”* declared Sadhana. *“Professor, please explain your usage of words,”* teased Gayathri. Sadhana was the psychologist and professor for the girls since she seemed to have a theory behind most things and would pull out information from her brain. It was a common belief that academics and art rarely went together. It was also a widespread assumption that if you are in the arts, you must have been terrible in academics. So Sadhana's high academic affluence was seen as professorial in the group. Sadhana had a secret pride in her academic achievements. *“Let's complain to Nagaraja and also catch her next time,”* said Suju. This became an issue amongst the dancers that again divided the girls based on their perspectives without being able to conclude why the girl stole things. Nagaraja

had dismissed all this curtly by reminding them of the real purpose of the trip.

It is interesting how all other things can become priority and issues than the vision, the true purpose. When other things than vision begin to occupy the group, there is a natural disturbance and derailment. For a successful project, the focus on vision is critical. There are chances of deviation, but as conscious keepers, the leaders have to bring the group back on track.

“Sadhana and Neetu, I don't want you both to do your solo items this evening and in the finale. Also, one more group dance will be cut”, declared Nagaraja to the four girls on the morning of the 5th day. “But why, Sir? We were excellent last evening,” asked Sadhana in shock. “You don't get it. Kavya and Sridevi will get the limelight, and it is the Minister recommendation. Also, the north Bangalore group will do extra items,” replied Nagaraj curtly. He had no need

to explain to these girls. “That's unfair, and they are not well trained too. How could you allow this? You know we have been practicing and looking forward to a solo item last one month. I am



willing to talk and will protest this decision”, Sadhana was angry, and tears were threatening to fall down. “Look, just don't argue with me. I am the Manager, and I decide who should be where. They are the bureaucrat daughters, and we can't say anything. Just listen to me, or you won't be performing other two items too,” Nagaraja spoke firmly, dismissed the girls' petition, and walked

away. Sadhana and Neetu felt the world crashing in front of them. The entire effort of going to Delhi seemed futile. They felt cheated. The true meritocracy had crashed, showing forth another side of the ugly world that Sadhana had never seen before. Something inside her hardened that evening, and it had been a challenge to pass the next two days with the group. Her self-esteem was questioned, and the harsh ways of the biased world had hit her.

Real value for meritocracy and honest dealings are a massive challenge for social entrepreneurs. Lobbying and corruption have had its ugly intrudes preventing the actual connection between donor and the recipient. Much of valuable energy goes in fighting injustice and creating pathways rather than creating robust ways of reaching help to the needy. Many a time, the connections to power and kickbacks received are valued much higher than the intent, purpose, and expertise of the social entrepreneur. This puts to question the tenacity and perseverance of a social entrepreneur to continue to exist and pursue their dreams of making this a better world.



“Sadhana, sadhanaaaa!! Why are you late for practice today? I was anxious you may not come. You know who has come? Come in soon”, Neetu pulled Sadhana's bag as Sadhana entered the rehearsal room. *“Who has come?”* curiosity pushed Sadhana to walk fast. Sat there in the middle part of the row, the new most popular hero of the Kananda films along with Manager Nagaraj and all girls surrounding him giggling and smiling ear to ear trying to grab his attention.

Sadhana's heart raced just looking at him, *“Why is he here? What is happening?”*. *“Oh! There is a new film they are planning, and Sruthi, that girl from north zone class, is the heroine. They needed*



some dance partners for a classical dance show in the movie, and so Nagaraju called him here. Sruthi's gang is not allowing anyone to even go near. You know, Sadhana, he was a student here 5 years

back, and he is an outstanding dancer”, Neetu rattled all information in one breathe like a bullet train. When Sadhana looked on, it felt a bit overwhelming with the way the girls pushed their books for an autograph, vied with each other to grab his attention; Nagaraju's leering remarks and jokes taking advantage of the situation was somehow suddenly nauseating for her. The hero was gloating in the attention he received. Sadhana felt her irritation and anger rise at the condescending attitude that was being displayed and the girls being oblivious to it, forgetting they were artists too. Sadhana with her ego and high self –esteem was a person who would not follow the crowd but would assess the situation.

“So, is there no practice class today?” Sadhana asked Neetu. *“Who wants to practice now,”* giggled Neetu, adding, *“I don't think so. They will now have only the selected girls perform a few numbers so that the hero and his director who is sitting behind him will get an idea”. “Selected girls? What do you mean? How can these people select without the right knowledge of the art?”* there was a tiny irritation in Sadhana's voice. *“Oh, Nagaraju has done it, and none of us are in the league too,”* answered Gayathri, who had joined in the conversation. Apparently, it was a game of who is who and the network one brings to the table. Only beyond that came a chance to showcase the talent and competence. Once a Hero, then everything dances to his fancy and not merit. Many factors that Sadhana knew existed revealed itself, shocking her and giving her a jolt! The bubbly and positive Neetu had a classic statement, *“Aiyoo, leave it, my dear. Not worth keeping these things in mind”*.

Interestingly the most network savvy in the group was Suju, who was fiercely focussed on getting to the top somehow. She was least worried about her talent or competence. She believed other things mattered more and had learned to be savvy!! The question that loomed large in Sadhana's mind that night was – *'Is the result*

important or is the means to get there important while working on vision.'

In the journey of social entrepreneurship, the question 'Will end justify means' is fundamental. In most spaces, the real merit of the issue will not stand ground at all. Vision is driven through many shortcut routes and unethical propositions that cut the merit away. A considerable part of the time is spent in managing the influential people and reaching the right ears that the rest who are not able to reach protest, and they are termed as activists. The original vision changes, and the efforts are to get the issue to be heard. This can be very frustrating for the social entrepreneur: They may question their own purpose, and even a dip in self-esteem is possible. The struggle of the social entrepreneur may not be about the resources but to hold on to the path itself.

“Sadhana, your friend Neetu had called. She wanted you to immediately go to the rehearsal hall,” said Amma waiting anxiously at the door for Sadhana to return from college. “Oh! But why? We don't have any rehearsal planned today. Is she already there?” Sadhana caught the feeling of anxiety and rushed to get ready. Little did she know that arriving at the rehearsal hall would spell the beginning of a genuinely different life for her. The sound of all dancing and familiar music greeted her as she stepped into the building. “Sir, I didn't know there was rehearsal today, and no one informed me either. I am sorry I wasn't here earlier” Sadhana spoke apologetically to Nagaraj as soon as she entered the hall. Nagaraj just nodded his head and dismissed it with a quick nod. Sadhana immediately noticed only four from the regular group were there, and others were replaced by others who were not the regulars. Nagaraj, in a matter of fact tone, said, “Sadhana, this is the group officially selected for the International Europe tour. So I did not inform you”.

Taken aback, Sadhana struggled to find her voice to ask, *“But when were the selections held and why only four from our group are there?”* In an irritated tone, Nagaraj closed the discussion with

“You don't understand these things. All selections were made last Sunday, and all are very useful, networked, and influential. Europe tour is not easy, and a lot of money is needed for selection, and they all can afford it.” “But, Sir, I have been in your group for so long, and it's a government-sponsored program. We have been working on these last six months. Prove to me how I am not as good a dancer to be on board than many of them?” Sadhana's activist role had got awakened, and her tone showed displeasure. *“You are better off focussing on our local tours for now, and this is not your debate forum to hold red flags and question things. Intellectual girls like you are always a nuisance, and you don't get that straight means do not work everywhere. You have to have money or beauty or people or muscle power, and you don't have any of these except for righteousness lecture and straightforwardness. The government officer's selection is final, and don't make a fuss here. You should have realistic goals and know yourself better. We will not have our regular programs till next month the girls are back from the tour”.*

Humiliation, shock, and feeling of being let-down descended slowly on Sadhana. She didn't wait to search for Neetu or talk to anyone. She felt her legs had a mind of its own, and they just moved her from the hall down the staircase to the main road. She just walked, not knowing where she was going. Her eyes had tears filled to the brim, threatening to come streaming down, and she didn't care if she was on the road and if people were watching her. She walked to the little park by the side of the rehearsal hall and sat on one of those hard stone benches silent, for god knows how long. There was a shocked blank feeling that was making her feel totally helpless. Must have been over 30 minutes when she picked her heavy heart and walked to the parking lot, finding her two-wheeler and didn't know how she reached home.

Amma was watching TV and shelling peas. Sadhana stormed into the house, and Amma knew by the way she walked in that

something was wrong, and Sadhana needed her attention. The tears that were held so far poured like two waterfalls. Amma, being who she was, only hugged her and allowed her to complete before she asked what had happened. Sadhana, who loved her mom, suddenly filtered the information of not being selected but never revealed the conversation Nagaraj had about



their social status or intellectualism. Amma's pride in her contribution to Sadhana could not be broken by the insensitive, corrupt Manager, and it was for Sadhana to face her battle. But Sadhana's self-esteem and confidence had touched the lowest ebb resting in self-doubt and vacuum.

For the number of people who are willing to stand up the social cause, how many are genuinely able to do good work? How many social organizations get the real support and visibility? Many of them rise to recognition and power through means that are not genuinely ethical. The straightforward and streaks of activism are shunned as the intellectuals and trouble makers. Many lose their self-confidence and motivation fighting for their rights to exist. The connections, network, and kickbacks become more significant than the work that is undertaken to transform the society. The real good work hardly gets noticed, and they exist in small pockets with unsung heroes and heroines unknown to the world. It's not surprising our country has thousands of social organizations reinventing wheels and unable to collaborate and make a mass impact.



Life is a paradox. It is true that when things settle down and there are fewer challenges to face, people are happy and productive. Paradoxically, it is also true that difficulties and unhappiness of the current state moves them to seek different levels of engagement in life. Yet, people are so emotionally reactive when upheavals happen, and things don't move as desired.

Similar was Sadhana's life. Just when she thought that life was a smooth, enjoyable ride, something would land in her plate, which would need immediate attention. She always had the choice to react or respond. To react, she just had to release her loaded emotional self, creating drama. But, to respond, she had to learn to move her location, uplift herself to the next level, and grow.

“Amma, I am afraid the roof will fall on us one night. The rain is incessant, and the house feels so scary with those huge trees shaking wildly in the wind. God, please save us in times like this!” With no power, continuous rain, and those huge trees shaking around the house, no number of vessels and buckets to collect the leaks seemed to serve their purpose. There is always a good samaritan who makes a difference and in walked Uncle Chandra one morning. He inspected the leaks and said its time you brought down the house and rebuild it; this meant a considerable cost that her family could not afford. How would they manage to live in that house? For every problem, there is a solution; one just has to find it. He came out with the solution that if they can only break the house midway and remodify and rebuild the roof, handling the design, purchasing materials, and supervision to themselves, then the cost could be halved. They had to pay only for the labor charges, which could be managed. Uncle was quick to say, *“I will*

oversee, and Sadhana can supervise and take care of material purchase on which I will update her.” It seemed exciting to Sadhana to know she was going to build her own house.

And, it turned out to be the most trying time as well as the most significant turning point to her acquiring confidence and leadership that will stand through her life. Managing labor, moving parents to different parts of the city till construction was over, to find the money needed for the project, pushed Sadhana to explore new avenues. She conducted workshops for children,



went to houses to take dance classes that would fund her education and also give her pocket money that took care of her essential needs. On the day of house warming after nearly 6 months of hard work, she had grown into a woman with confidence and self-belief to face anything that came her way. She had funded her own education, and being a dance teacher had opened a new vista of seeing the depth and breadth of dance.

For many social entrepreneurs, every step is a challenge. Unless they love to face the challenges, they will find the path full of struggles. If they can convert every problem into an opportunity, they will find new solutions not only for themselves but also for the world.

The confidence led her to pursue Vidwat, a masters program in dancing. This called for a higher level of music and dance studies. She had to also perform in two panels, and it was an exam conducted by the government. *“What is the use of all this*



struggle? Are you going to teach dance or be a performer? Why are you crazy to study more for all these exams?” Her friends and relatives quizzed her. Sadhana was clear that academic and research understanding would build her base, and one day everything she learned would be useful. She put her heart and soul into it, and it gave her rich dividends in terms of marks and awards. Achievements are dangerous rewards in life; while they lift the individual to a height, they also keep them precariously high, held by the ego, which, when punctured, can let the person drop like a hot potato!

Social entrepreneurs are made through the studies they do, or through the passion, they hold to make a difference? While the passion may set them on a path, they need to understand the sociological and psychological perspectives as well as the technological dimensions of the interventions or products they want to use to make that difference. Research and development has to become a part of the entrepreneurial journey. Many a time, the doing takes precedence over understanding. While doing may

be essential for beginning the journey, the sustenance, quality, and growth are highly dependent on the depth of understanding.

“Meet me tomorrow afternoon, and we will decide,” said the voice on the other side. Sadhana had applied for an internship in an organization. This also included an opportunity to participate and manage a cultural event from the HR perspective. She had come with a high recommendation and couldn't quite understand why the person who was supposed to give her the information would want to decide anything after meeting her. After college hours, she and her friend went to meet the man who sounded highhanded.

“What is the difference or connect between stayi bhava and sanchari bhava”? In the varnam that you mentioned, what would be the nayaki, and what would be the movement of this person from where she begins to where she ends?” Sitting across the table was a middle-aged man, Mr.Rishi, the HR executive. He looked an



artist as well as a saint with a magnetic personality and a volley of questions, catching every word that Sadhana uttered. He asked the meaning, purpose, and the intricate nuances of music. It seemed very stifling to Sadhana, as though she had to prove her every certificate and award with an answer from intellect. *"It's interesting - the government gives medals for writing English than for understanding and living the art,"* remarked Rishi. *"I am appalled at the way you dismiss the hard-earned efforts of 15 years training Mr. Rishi. Are you conducting an interview for me, or are you trying to prove I can't do the job? If you find me unsuitable, just say so. I will tell the Director HR that you find me unsuitable. It's not courteous to blame the system or be judgemental about a person you hardly know".* Rishi had questioned the integrity of the knowledge Sadhana held proudly. She was afraid of the tears forming at the corner of the eyes, threatening to roll down and give her away. Her ego was punctured, and she thought she will have to teach him a lesson someday to do this to a stranger like her.

Rishi realized he had pushed her to the edge and was laughing within himself. He enjoyed these ego puncturing acts, of course, but he had already begun to like this ferocious young girl who had the spirit to fight back. His softness inside sprung out, and he interjected with *"Hey, hey... relax... I love the way you stood up with your knowledge and gave apt answers... but I want you to begin to live this Kuttima. Oh, can I call you Kuttima? I see an enormous potential in you to explore the meaning of oneself through your art. That is the true purpose of this art, taking its birth in you. Integrate this art, and you will find yourself. I am nobody to decide if you get this internship or not. I was just spending time trying to know you and your art. Please join next week, and you are welcome".*

Sadhana fell silent and was confused. She didn't know if he genuinely appreciated her capacity or was finding her inadequacies. She didn't know if she liked him and found him

interestingly challenging or if she felt threatened by the questions he had pushed her with. However, the gas balloon inside her as the Rank holder and medallist had come crashing down. A new era had begun. A mentor had found a mentee.

Universe has its own unique ways of normalizing. Social entrepreneurs, when they find success in what they are doing, can also get onto a pedestal that doesn't allow integration to happen. Sometimes 'knowing stops them from knowing more' (Sampath,J.M). Then come people in various forms to batter that ego. If the worthiness of the act is recognized, there is growth. A valuable mentorship can be evolved. If not, it leads to a bitter battle of proving and not of elevation and journey towards humility. The growth and development are sacrificed for sustaining the ego allowing decay.



“When the going gets tough, the tough get going”— Joseph Kennedy

When we choose a career or path in life, the general idea is to have a life that is comfortable, happy, and fulfilling. It may be comfortable, but all comfortable jobs are not happy and fulfilling. It may be happy, but it may not be comfortable and fulfilling. Most times, it may be deeply fulfilling but may be strewn with a lot of issues and experiences that are not necessarily happy and comfortable. How many of us think of the path down 20 – 30 years while choosing our careers. When they are seen as mere means of living or work to be done, no doubt they are not ridden with passion and involvement. This is precisely the place where a social entrepreneur differs. A social entrepreneur is mostly driven by choice of fulfillment and has to willingly go through the uncomfortable path. The vision beckons, and any hurdles on the road are a space to test one's tenacity and stamina to hold on.

Sadhana, too moved with veracity to find areas where art was appreciated. Be it a temple or gathering or a marriage hall or corporate event, solo or group, she performed in several places. It was not an income proposition at all, but it was how she could keep her faith in art and reach out through her art. Some opportunities came for television shows and theatre too. New friends joined in, and she was invited to be part of other groups. With her high competency for research, knowledge of the art, and ability to articulate, write, and present her points, she was a naturally chosen one for being an emcee. She was used more than recognized by the groups. Some of her good friends warned her of not being given the due credit. But none of this deterred her in offering her best and doing her best.

Sadhana knew none could help her unless she helped herself first. People invest not in the idea as much as they do in the person and their conviction. So she moved on to be an advocate for the art, enthuse younger girls to learn dance and also write in magazines about the art. Yet, something inside her was not fulfilled. The search was on, and she saw herself on an unending road.

There were offers to run workshops in dancing, summer camps for school children, annual day programs in schools were the list of activities which Sadhana was breezing through like a busy bee. Her everlasting smile, a bundle of energy, non-satiating enthusiasm to be around people made her have a magical connection to all that she set out to do.

Asha appeared at home one morning and asked, *“Hey, Sadhana, my aunt wants to know if you can help her and her friends learn to dance for a competition. It is next month, and I told them you are really a good dancer and can teach too. If this goes well, they are looking for someone to help them in their Mahila sangha (women forum) annual day too”*. With eyes wide open in surprise, Sadhana asked Asha, *“your aunt and her friends? Will they dance? They must be nearly 50 plus, isn't it? Gosh, I have never handled that age people”*. Asha quickly interjected, *“Oh! Don't you worry about their age; they are a bunch of enthusiastic people and want to do a lot of things they have not done before. If you agree, I will tell them we can begin this week itself. Will Monday afternoon work for you?”* Thus began a new path for Sadhana... something that would soon be deeply fulfilling, satisfying, and meaningful.

It was a large open hall, and nearly 35 women talking in high pitched voices in groups and music playing in the background was the scene when Sadhana entered the dance hall. Ladies, anywhere between 45 and 75years, stood there watching Sadhana in amazement and eagerness when Asha's aunt introduced her as the new dance teacher. Sadhana was used to teaching dance

through steps and songs. She realized very soon that there was high enthusiasm and a whole set of non-cooperating limbs and joints, making even the simple steps seem most complicated. In this scenario, Sadhana estimated that their interest will not go beyond the first week. She had to do something very different. She came home to pen down her notes, which read - *“Here are a bunch of people who have been long devoid of achievement doses in life. They need to do seemingly impossible*



things and get the adrenalin rush and a sense of achievement. They have broken their own thresholds and moved up. This moving will enable them to see life differently and find meaning to get up every day from their beds”. So began the dance therapy where dancing became more a therapeutic and threshold crossing process than a performance event. The side effects were that teams started building, better interpersonal relationships, quarrels and squabbles reduced, lesser joint pains, more abundant smiles on faces, weight balancing, sugar levels came down... many more. Sadhana became the favorite of all ladies, and she was given more and more opportunities and lovingly nicknamed 'Asthana Vidwan,' meaning 'The Scholar of the Court', famous during the kingly times.

**“Anything worthwhile in life requires team work,
And you cannot manage, what you don't understand”
– Martine Rothblatt**

Nearly after 6 months, one-afternoon, Sadhana sat on the steps of the temple hall after the rehearsals slowly walked Aunt Uma and touched Sadhana's shoulders. *“I should thank you, my dear, she said with tiny tear-pearls forming in her eyes. I had a major mishap in family, went into depression, fought cancer, and couldn't sleep without pain killers and sedatives. But, last three months, from the time I am part of this dancing group, I have stopped sedatives and halved the pain killers, and I am sleeping peacefully through the night. I can't be more thankful to you, and please continue to help more people”.* Sadhana, with her eyes full, immediately bowed down to God to give her the strength to do more. At that moment, she knew she was searching at the wrong end.

She told herself that I have found the essence of my life – *“Put a smile on every face and help them see the meaning of life”... A time will come all this will happen and much more”.* Lo! Somewhere afar, the temple bell rang, and the Universe had heard it!!

“Tough time never last, but tough people do”—Robert H. Schuller

A social entrepreneur's journey begins with efforts to resolve issues, atrocities, injustice, ensure fair play, innovate, create new pathways ... there is an essence to every activity they engage in. Finding vision is finding the direction and path, not a sequence of activities. The projects may end; activities may be blocked; yet, if the essence is recognized, the life moves on in the same direction. Be it a casual chat or a serious forum, the essence shines forth as the identity of the person. Social entrepreneurs may get caught in furthering the cause through activities alone and fall into distress if there is a block and even give up the journey itself. The journey is not started to be given up when difficulties arise. They have to realize that social entrepreneurship is also a journey to discover self. To find out their calling and dedicate the rest of their lives to the

essence of the trip. It is not a set of targets and destinations alone. It is to leave behind a legacy for oneself; make a difference to one person or the entire world, and realize one's own potential without excuses to self and the universe.



15

Evolution, connecting to ultimate purpose

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

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

How many social entrepreneurs and people who work with them realize the value of every stage and not get frustrated or de-motivated?

It was time for the monsoon rains to begin, and an ancient man was digging pits in his garden.

“What are you doing?” His neighbor asked.

“Planting mango trees” was the reply.



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

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

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

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

“Hey, Sadhana, I have not so nice news for you,” said the Manager one day when she arrived at the rehearsals. *“The project proposal you had given to the management of the center to begin the therapy for senior citizens is not going to happen. They have rejected it and taken up the science programs for children this year”*. The shocked Sadhana stopped and screamed, *“What! The president was so encouraging and spoke to me as though it was*

already done last week. Why such a U-turn in the decision? I have already told so many and even registered some of them for the classes from next month. How can they do this to me?"... Tiny tears were forming at the edge of the eyes, and the heartfelt massive, anxiety fast filling in her body... "Sorry, these are the ways of life. I am sorry I can't help in this anymore", said the manager giving her a small hug.

When things happen, whether good or bad, they arrive in a sequence. Blame it on time, horoscope, or luck; it just doesn't help. Just after two days, there was a mail from the Professor informing the Ph.D. application was not accepted since the Management Institution had withdrawn the collaboration with the State University. This was a shock since Sadhana was working the last 8 months on the hope that this will come through. It meant one has to start all over again for admissions.

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

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

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

In the journey of social entrepreneurship, nothing is passed on by the Universe as waste. Every thought, every little action counts. The cocooning and introspection form one of the most significant ways in which the potency of the action can be increased multiple times. Many times nothing may move, and everything may seem to have come to an end, a thing of the past. But that is when the social entrepreneur has to be most awake. It only says that the transition has to happen from the previous stage to the next stage. An act is over; and a new action will begin, which will play a large part in the bigger scheme of things. A thought never dies in the Universe. It remains in the hope of growing. A social entrepreneur does not wait for an acknowledgment. It is a journey, and he just continues to live. The real entrepreneurship journey never ends. It remains irrespective of who is working for it. It's a legacy left behind.

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

So is Sadhana's story. A new story had begun with a continued thought. Sadhana, in her journal, made notes after nearly two years, "I see a new light. There is no climb; there is no destination to reach. There are no

outside accolades that say I have achieved or no real tangible awards that can prove my sincerity or worth. All this is in the living truth. True living of every day. Nothing goes waste. Nothing needs to be proven, and nothing needs to be achieved. I am part of the Universe, and the Universe is a part of me. When the seed is planted, I have to wait till the earth breaks, and a new sapling is formed. A new form or being comes. It holds the potential of the seed, but it is not the seed. It has a nature and a life of its own

carrying the thought that the Universe gave. It carries the hope that the Universe holds in its womb”.

“It's a girl,” whispered her husband into the ears of a half-conscious new mother. *“My love, my little darling, I will wait to see the journey continue. You are the Universe's hope; you are the real connection between the thought and the action. You belong not to me but to this earth, and the journey only continues. I see the hope in your shining eyes. I see I have a larger role to play in being who I can be, so you will become who you can be. I will be the 'Sadhana' I always wanted to be, and I will be the butterfly so that you can be more. Together we can explore the world to take the thought to newer heights of action. All the best, my little one.”*



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



Thank you, Ms. Banu, and Ms. Latha of CSIM for giving me this opportunity to pen my thoughts and weave my story for the young aspiring social entrepreneurs and the significant contributions they make to leave this a better world for tomorrow.



Dr. Kalpana Sampath Ph.D

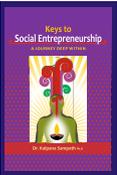
Kalpana has been working as a coach, trainer, social entrepreneur, and development artiste for nearly 3 decades helping individuals and organizations focus on excellence through clarifying their vision and values. Her work has spanned a large section of society from involvement with corporate organizations to her work with children exploring life education. Having a flair for writing and research, she has also contributed many articles and books in the area of learning and development. Being an artist, scriptwriter, and actor, she is also involved in projects that connect social issues to theater, movies, music, and dance. Kalpana leads Education for Integrating Life (EFIL Educational Services Pvt Ltd), dedicated to reaching out Life education curriculum to Principals, Teachers, Students, and Parents of educational institutions. With the flagship program EQUBE (enabling evolutionary excellence) Kalpana has been enabling the Social entrepreneurship development process amongst senior school students and youth along with her accomplished team. Her soul dwells in art and her love flows through the myriad expressions of art forms.



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This is the compilation of the articles written for conversation, a news letter of CSIM chennai.

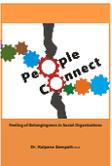
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