

Conversations

A Chronicle of Social Currents

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Cover Story >> Pg 6 Blistering Bricks

About lives of brick kiln workers

Photo:AK

From the Editor

Dear Friend,

Inspiration is a rare quality indeed. Some people are able to inspire others without even being aware of doing so. Some would say that it is an inborn quality, while others may argue that it is something that can be learnt or cultivated. Inspirational people have many common attributes such as courage, perseverance, positive

mindset, dedication, and passion.

Those who are gifted with these wonderful attributes are commended for using them for the positive benefit of others and for those who don't naturally have what it takes to be an inspiration. Taking the time and trouble to observe some notably inspirational people can prove to be a great learning curve.

The change makers featured this month did not realize that as they were achieving their goals, they were simultaneously inspiring the people around them. I urge you to read these inspiring stories and start thinking of ways to stirring the minds of people around you.

—PN Devarajan

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Traffic News



INFORMATION PROVIDED
BY THE COMMISSIONER OF
POLICE, CHENNAI FOR THE
MONTH OF MAY 2012

Loss of lives due to accidents	No. of accidents reported
110	735

**NUMBER OF CASES
BOOKED FOR TRAFFIC
VIOLATION: 2,89,681**

- Signal violation - 17,897
- Wrong side driving - 31
- Over speeding - 8,251
- Violation of one way rule - 13,174

ADD SPARKLE TO THE SEASON WITH A
TOUCH OF THE ORIENT AT **China Town**
A SIP OF SCINTILLATING SPAIN AT **Zara**
A TINGE OF EXOTIC THAILAND AT **Benjarong**
A MESMERISING SENSE OF NORTH INDIA
AT **COPPER CHIMNEY** A SPLASH OF COASTAL FRESHNESS
AT **Kokum** A MÉLANGE OF SPICES AT **ENTÉ KERALAM**
AND VEGETARIAN GOODNESS AT **Cream Centre**

Exclusively for these couples

Balamurugan, Founder, Inter-caste Marriages Foundation, Dindivanam, has been through various troughs in integrating couples of inter-caste marriages in the districts of Tamil Nadu.

The best thing about democracy is: 'there is room for every shade of opinion'. Here, we are to learn about a man who is living his thought despite all odds. If most mavericks have a record of discontinuing studies, he too has stood by the test.

Balamurugan, Founder, Inter-caste Marriages Foundation, Dindivanam, has been through various troughs in integrating couples of inter-caste marriages in the districts of Tamil Nadu. Like they say, practicing is one, while preaching is another. Murugan has broken this cliché.

As a student, he had to discontinue his graduation because he got a job with the Tamil Nadu State Transport Department. "My family circumstances were so," he shrugs. One would expect such a person to marry a little later in life after achieving a sustainable financial freedom. But, Murugan was different. He got married to a Muslim girl in 1991 when he was 21 years old.

"It was not an easy show. There are a lot of issues to be dealt with than what one would see in films," smiles Murugan.

The hardships faced during his marriage have moulded him into a person of introspection and action. In his desire to show the way forward for couples like him, he identified 13 groups which worked for these couples and brought them together under a single banner in 1994.

"It was in this process that I came across a group functioning in Salem district since 1984. Like many others, this issue has also percolated and persisted," he adds.

Why are inter caste marriages looked down at? Religion, caste, and socio-economic status emerge as determinants; and thereby



"Why are inter caste marriages looked down at? Religion, caste, and socio-economic status emerge as determinants; and thereby companionship—which is what marriage is all about—takes a back seat."

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Murugan remarks that people are used to looking forward to society's approval for all their actions. Hence, even if someone attempts to set a new trend, the equation is often lopsided. Fortunately, the state government has been extending support to such couples through numerous initiatives.

During the regime of Arignar C N Annadurai, former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, registration of Inter-caste marriages was introduced through an Act in 1969 and in 1972 couples were offered free land for construction of houses. Further, for the children of these couples 12 seats in Government Engineering and Medical colleges have been allocated besides two seats for teacher training.

During Kalaignar Karunanidhi's Government, preference was given to those who had registered with the employment exchange.

The Inter-caste Marriages Foundation has kept track of all the government programmes and worked for creating awareness amongst the couples in all districts of Tamil Nadu. Additionally, it also took up the task of ensuring that the benefits reached them.

"Implementation is the part where you struggle the most," he quips.

With employment being a major concern the resolve to protest was not long lived. The couples, who find their ways in the process, do not continue to protest. "While the uneducated go after money, the educated go behind jobs. At the end, they are all gone," laments

Murugan, who spends a great part of his salary in this work.

Are these marriages successful? "One cannot have doubts at all. I am successful and my marriage is. My wife is very supportive and together we are paving way for a change. So, lack of money and assets are never complained about, though its absence is felt," he says proudly.

Murugan explains that love marriage is the result of an emotional outcome and a gap can be easily created by 'energizing the individual's ego'.

So, do the couples who benefit from the movement come back to support its work? "Not at all," he says adding, "Until they get their benefits, I'm treated like almighty. Once it is all done, everything is forgotten."

Surprisingly, this attitude of the couples does not hurt or disappoint Murugan. "It does not bother me because I'm neither a politician nor do I vouch for any caste or religion," he clarifies.

Murugan has coordinated through the movement fasts and protests demanding implementation of government orders for the couples of inter-marriages. Although he corresponds regularly to all MLAs, till date this issue has not been raised in the assembly. "This only goes on to communicate that our leaders do not endorse the idea. Until all our leaders can be identified apart from their caste, this situation will continue to be helpless," he laments.

"Government policies are not a right for an Individual. Continued implementation entails a great struggle questioning the very survival of the movement where the members leave once their needs are met with. I don't even own a bicycle, how will they respect me?" says Murugan in the context of the paltry resources that have kept the movement on for years now.

Murugan came to know about the Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM) through a friend at a training programme in 2007. "The four-month programme made a huge difference to me and my movement. Administrative discipline is the best learning I have gained besides documentation and networking with like-minded organizations," says he.

Having worked consistently for over two decades, we are sure that his movement would pave way for a better society. Let us wish him the best in his efforts!

Murugan has plans to launch a website and is mobilizing support to expand his reach. If you wish to support his cause, please call him at +91 9791076073

—Shanmuga Priya. R

CSIM in Tindivanam



CSIM plans to start its first rural centre at Tindivanam, 120 kms away from Chennai. On 26th May, 2012, the CSIM team held an Orientation programme on Social entrepreneurship at the Ramaraj Kalyana Mandapam. About 120 socially motivated individuals attended the programme. Ms. Eva Rosalin, Coordinator, CSIM Chennai welcomed the gathering and spoke about CSIM and its activities. Ms Latha Suresh, Director, CSIM, oriented the gathering on the concept of social entrepreneurship.

“Identifying the root cause of a social problem and solving it in a large

scale by systemic interventions is being social entrepreneurial, was highlighted by her.

Ms. Marie Banu, Head – Communications, CSIM, gave interesting insights on Fund Raising strategies and explained about how the Battle of the Buffet 2012 was an innovative fund raising strategy for the NGOs in Tamil Nadu to benefit.

There was very good interaction from the participants and they were convinced that Tindivanam needed a CSIM to help the local NGO heads and aspiring social workers think differently and launch new initiatives for social change.

Few CSIM Chennai alumni shared their experience with CSIM and how the course had helped them shape their ideas. M. S. Jothi, Field Work Coordinator, CSIM, proposed the vote of thanks.

CSIM envisions launching 100 centres by 2020. Currently, there are 5 centres functioning from Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mumbai and Coimbatore.

If you wish to launch a CSIM centre in your region, please contact us at +91-9282205123 or 044-42805365.

—Latha Suresh



Magic Column

CSIM Alumnus Shabeena Francis shares her learnings and experiences



CSIM is indeed a place to learn, develop, hone skills, and give vision to our dreams. As a prospective Social Entrepreneur in CSIM I developed a vision for my life.

I know what I want to do in my life. A dream without a vision has no meaning. We can give colours to our dreams only if we have a vision and if we channel it through proper work. CSIM has been for me that channel. Before joining CSIM I had an understanding that social work was about helping people by raising funds.

The Post Graduate Diploma in Social Initiative and Management course that I underwent here changed my entire perspective towards the development sector. I learnt that financial resources and funds are just one component and that there were many other areas which should be addressed while dealing with social issues.

Though at present I am not directly involved in grassroots level activity, I am shaping my career in the academic field. I intend to make a difference and bring about a change through my academic career and writing. At CSIM, along with coursework I developed the skills of documentation and after graduation I got a job in the field of documentation and training.

Today, while pursuing my Ph.D at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, I still think about the learning that I gained at CSIM. Rather of thinking about the problem I try to find a solution for the problem. The memories of CSIM are always with me and I hope that on the verge of becoming a prospective Social Entrepreneur I'll surely create an impact in the coming future.

—Shabeena Francis

Where schools go to children

“Starting a movement is relatively easier. Sustaining is truly an onerous task.”



“With 1200 rupees, a child’s education throughout the year is taken care of. The syllabus for Tamil, English, arithmetic, and science are provided by the schools.”

Multiple streams in the education system have often been a bone of contention. Specifically, because of the inequity it builds. Given that the parents would like their children to receive some kind of education, small scale efforts like the ‘Single Teacher Schools’ come in handy, applauding the purpose.

Single Teacher Schools is a project of Swami Vivekananda Rural Development Society, founded on the principles of taking schools to children, ensuring that access does not restrict literacy to the rural poor. Since its establishment in 2006 in the remote villages of Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram districts of Tamil Nadu, the number of such schools has multiplied from 150 to 657 today.

“Starting a movement is relatively easier. Sustaining is truly an onerous task,” says Mohan who is with the movement since six months post-retirement. He was a marketing professional at Everest India Limited and served as Assistant Project Officer with Tamil Nadu Government’s Magalir Thittam in Salem District. He acknowledges that true India is in the rural areas and a holistic development calls for the participation of NGOs on a significant scale.

The best part of the conception is making use of local resources—both human and material—for the education of children. Educated youth from the villages are identified and encouraged to teach. They are trained to impart skills based on the syllabus prepared.

Simultaneously, they are also trained to serve as health workers thereby becoming an interface between the people and the primary health centres.

The teacher being a localite makes a big difference in the rural areas as people are often apprehensive to mix with the mainstream. Getting to the economics of it, the costs works out to be 100 rupees per child per month. “With 1200 rupees, a child’s education throughout the year is taken care of. The syllabus for Tamil, English, arithmetic, and science are provided by the schools. Discipline, hygiene, and elementary yoga are also taught with a focus on character building,” he says.

The movement has had its own moments of ups and downs. From a time when the availability of financial resources decided the next discourse, the movement has today reached a stage where the reach of resources has to be made known. “We have sustained this silent revolution,” smiles Mohan. Asking about people’s support for the movement, Mohan says, “We have no protests from the localites against our activities which is in itself an endorsement of our work.”

Alongside teacher training, a suitable place is identified to serve as a classroom for about 30 students. It could be a community hall, temple or even space under a huge tree. “All that the children need is a place to learn and a trained teacher,” simplifies Mohan. Classes from first to fifth

standard are conducted six days a week. Interestingly, the schools function between 5:30 pm and 8:30 pm thereby not giving room for wage labour to interfere in the pursuit of basic education.

“The movement is gradually making inroads in the district of Vellore, with 35 centres already being established. The success of this programme lies in the fact that we are being asked to set up similar centres in Theni district. Strictly driven by community needs, we have just begun the survey here. Work in Thiruvannamalai and Vizhupuram districts are also on the cards,” he elaborates.

After fifth standard, most of the children join government or panchayat board schools to pursue their education. “It is imperative to catch them young and provide an opportunity in the formative years itself. It is only when they complete their primary schooling, can they reach high school,” asserts Mohan.

Asking him about how satisfactory it gets, one would be surprised to learn that the changes in the cultural aspects are more heartening than the improvement in the curriculum.

On concerns about the children’s future, the team takes pleasure in making the children ‘DREAM’. “Our children can tell you what they want to become. Making them dreamers is the most contending experience,” he exults.

The members are consistently involved in creating better infrastructure for the

centres, providing educational aids, and setting up a monitoring system. Internal and external audits have contributed to their growth over the years.

“The suggestion for exposure visits has worked very well. The children’s exposure to city college students demonstrated the rural-urban divide. Children realized what they could become in the future. To put it simply, a judicious mix of science, mathematics, English, moral science, hygiene, games, have gone into making the rural children a better generation than their parents,” says Mohan.

In his happiness, he narrates an incident where a school headmaster had mentioned that children from these schools fared better than the others. So, what made the difference? “Identify good teachers, train and imbibe the right attitude towards teaching. There lies the challenge. It makes a world of difference,” concludes Mohan.

Let’s wait to see the wonders that the replication of this model is set to create!

—Shanmuga Priya. R

Conversations team spends an evening with the brick kiln workers in Aranavoyal

Blistering BRICKS

The sun was blazing and summer was its peak at 42 degrees when we drove along Poonamalee high road to document the lives of the brick kiln workers at Aranavoyal, a village located 32 kilometers from Chennai.

Our NGO contact Logammal led us to the brick kiln that was situated near the main road at Aranavoyal. An iron pole served as a checkpost at the entrance of the brick kiln that was spread over 10 acres of land. After Logammal explained the purpose of our visit, the gate was opened for us.

It was around 3 in the afternoon. We stepped out of the car and walked towards a cluster of women and children. After introducing ourselves, AK set off to take pictures while I walked around seeking shade for the interview.

I saw a large thatched structure and doubled my speed to reach this place. Just then, I noticed Murugan, 38, stepping out of this shed. I stopped him and enquired if he would be interested to talk to *Conversations*. "How long will you take? I can give you three minutes. Ask quickly what you want," he said instantly.

"I will try to finish in less than two minutes," I replied. I was confident to convince him to converse for a longer time.

We stepped into the thatched shed that was lined up with bricks waiting for their turn to get burnt. In less than a minute, Murugan stacked some bricks and offered it to me as a seat. I was overwhelmed with his hospitality and asked him to also seat himself and said that he was going to be the hero for my story.

Murugan was thrilled to hear this and this set the beginning for our conversation.

"I hail from Thirunavallur at Villupuram district and belong to the Parayar (scheduled caste) community. I have been engaged in brick-making for over 15 years. During monsoon, I work as an agricultural labourer. Agriculture work is less cumbersome, but I get paid only Rs. 120 a day. My wife Jaya and I earn around 1,000 to 1,200 rupees a day in the brick kiln," he said.

"During Pongal, the harvest

festival, our owner offers an interest-free loan of Rs. 70,000 to each of the 20 families who live here. We repay the loan amount in installments at the time of receiving our weekly payment," he added. Looking around the land where the sand was piled up, I enquired about the work at the brick kiln.

"Our owner procures sand from a dealer which is heaped here. We then transfer small portions of the sand using a manual trolley and prepare the clay by adding water to it. We use a spade to turn the sand every two hours to make it soft, and leave it overnight to set."

"A length of 25 footsteps is measured on a clean patch of land and the softened clay is placed in three rows. Clay is taken by hand and moulded into bricks one by one. These moulded bricks are then stacked twelve per column and allowed to dry in the sun. They are left to dry for two days and turned over to facilitate uniform drying."

I looked around the thatched shed with awe at about 30,000 bricks in it. While I wondered how much of labour had gone into making these bricks,

Murugan's son Surya, 8, stepped into the shed and in a moment started climbing the bricks that were lined up beside me.

"We start our day's work around 2 am and finish laying the bricks before the heat sets in. We rest at 10 am and commence work again at 3 pm. We use a tool to straighten the bricks and obtain a smooth surface. Once it is dried, they are then stacked in this shed. My wife and I can set 3,000 bricks in a day easily," said a proud Murugan.

About ten children from the colony surrounded us and drew our attention by playing pranks and laughing at each other. Murugan's daughter Jothika was shy and so was his son Dorai.

I requested Murugan to demonstrate the making of bricks and he readily obliged. Jaya helped Murugan and within a minute the bricks were moulded.

Not wanting to bother Murugan further, we took leave of him and thanked his family for their time.

The children joined us as we walked through the colony where the Goundar community lived. Here, we met Sushila who was leaning against a wall. When we enquired about the work at the brick chamber, she immediately rose and led us to the chamber.

"The chimney passes through a tunnel burning the bricks on rotation. About 15,000 bricks are laid in this chamber and it takes two days for the entire set of bricks to get burnt. Coal is used as fuel," she explained.

"We are paid Rs. 1,350 a week which is much lesser than those who earn by making the raw bricks. In fact, it is because of our labour these bricks can be put to use," she added.

The heat did not deter these families from work and it seemed as if they were all charged with solar energy. While I complained about the weather being unbearable, Sushila concluded saying, "It is this heat that gives us food."

As the evening drew to a close we bid adieu to these families and headed towards our vehicle. We waved goodbye until we lost sight of each other.

—Marie Banu



Photos: AK

Of Life and Hope

“Only my grandmother knew that I was HIV positive. Being illiterate, her awareness about HIV was limited to knowing that it is a dreadful disease.”

S. Netravati is a 24-year-old counsellor, who works at the SNR hospital, Kolar, counselling HIV positive and AIDS patients. The profession is not surprising, considering that Karnataka has one of the highest cases of HIV/AIDS in the country. But what is different in this situation is that Netravati herself is infected with HIV.

Affected at the tender age of 11, she has been battling HIV for over 13 years. “Only my grandmother knew that I was HIV positive. Being illiterate, her awareness about HIV was limited to knowing that it is a dreadful disease. Even then, she did not tell anybody—not even me,” Netravati said.

It was only when Netravati was being diagnosed for tuberculosis did she learn that she was also HIV positive. “I was shattered! To make matters worse, when I told my close friends about my condition,



they abandoned me. My health deteriorated further and my white blood cells count fell alarmingly low. It was then that the doctors from SNR counseled me. After medication, my health returned to normalcy. What I am today is all because of them,” she said.

When asked about the awareness about HIV in Kolar, she expressed that the situation earlier was terrible. “People did not know what HIV/AIDS meant. However, due to efforts of NGO’s and hospitals to increase awareness, the situation has now improved slightly. Despite this, the total number of registered HIV positive patients under anti-retroviral Therapy (ART) is 4237, which is not a small number,” she explained.

Jeevan Asha is an organization where HIV positive patients are counseled and helped to lead a normal life. They form a system called ‘positive network’ where the patients are counseled, advised, and encouraged to lead a normal life. Netravati was inspired by this institute to take up counseling as a career.

“I know what it feels like to be one of them. The pain, rejection, feeling of

helplessness—I have felt it all. It is difficult for the patients to discuss their condition with counselors. Since I openly declare that I am a HIV positive patient, they feel more comfortable discussing their issues with me,” she added.

Speaking about her counselling experience, Netravati said, “So far, it has been superb. I am extremely happy in my profession. Even though I have got job offers from NGOs for the post of a supervisor, I do not want to leave this present counselor position.”

With a perennial smile on her face, she concluded by saying, “I couldn’t have hoped for a better life. Everyone here treats me like family. It is a fantastic experience.”

—Apuurva S

Asian College of Journalism

POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT (PGDSEM)

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ELIGIBILITY – Graduate of any discipline. Knowledge of English is essential

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 - Identify opportunities in the social sector
- Draft a business plan for a social enterprise
- Learn effective management strategies
 - Use social audit tools



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The buck stops with the teacher

In 1998, a group of adoptive parents launched Relief Foundation to engage in family-based care for children who are placed at various governmental institutions in Tamil Nadu. Gradually, they worked with the homes and dealt with child-protection and rehabilitation issues. Soon they noticed that however hard they or the institutions that they worked with tried, children did not express a sense of belongingness to where they lived. Children living in homes were routinely found to be bitter, unhappy, dropping out of school, running away from the homes, and so on. “Why are we children here?” they would ask themselves. The answer was simple. This was a forced ‘option’ on the children as outside these homes they ran the risk of being attacked or exploited.

Up to 2008, Relief Foundation has been working closely with the Juvenile Justice System. Roping in educationists, corporate houses, as well as welfare specialists the organization has been conducting studies on education reform. Years of study on the factors that helped child growth and independence led them to one conclusion—if the school was right, then the chances of the child blossoming into a self-reliant and successful individual was far higher than if it was not.

Says Vidya Shankar, Chairperson, Relief Foundation, “We realized that we were all along working at the fag end of a lengthy problem. It was time to start focusing on schools and we did so without wasting further time.”

Thus began the school reform process. Relief Foundation, in collaboration with Shriram Foundation, adopted five schools around the Thiruneermalai area where they conducted training programs for teachers, shared good practices, developed lesson plans, and worked on improving the general schooling experience for children.

“The first few months



were disappointing because the teachers themselves fared poorly in the training programs. Their own baggage of bad education and lack of self-esteem led them to exhibit low caliber. This came as a challenge in our quest to establish the school as a social change agent,” says Vidya.

Relief Foundation continued to support these schools by providing infrastructure and logistical support by appointing a social worker in every school. The social worker did a community mapping of the area, and by involving the Shriram Group’s ‘Give a life’ sponsorship project developed a unique vocational training programme for the children.

“If children want to learn carpentry, or pottery, the school should provide them a platform to learn and develop their skills. They can learn mathematics from farmlands. Sports as a career should also be promoted among discerning children. Why not?” asks a passionate Vidya, adding fervently, “The buck really does stop with the teacher. If there is a good teacher around, no child would feel a lack of love,

understanding and nurturing in life.”

Recently, in January 2012, Relief Foundation started work on setting up a ‘Teachers’ Lab’—a hunt for the most progressive thinking graduates with a love for learning and a love for teaching. The identified teachers will be placed with the five schools that the foundation works in collaboration with Shriram Foundation. This lab would further train and educate the graduate teachers and place them in these five schools. Although this programme is loosely based on the concept of ‘Teach for India’, the premise for this lab is to step into the education system as a preventive measure to stop exploitation.

Besides, the organization works on capacity building for parents and keeps in touch with the local communities. “The dialogue process has to be continual,” says Vidya who believes that greater interaction with the communities can help resolve issues such as intolerance, migration, dis-continuation of schooling, and delinquency. “When there’s a good school around, parents don’t mind shifting their homes there,” says a confident Vidya, adding that, “when the community owns the school, there is nothing more powerful or game-

changing than that!”

Relief Foundation also believes in supporting young adults and any other willing, enthusiastic social entrepreneurs to start their own community schools. It is presently tying up with several corporate houses to ensure a steady flow of funds that may be awarded in the form of fellowships for candidates with the most creative idea to set up schools, especially in rural areas. “Whether a fellow or a teacher, we aim to design a pay package that is attractive, not meager,” says a resolute Vidya.

The organization is presently gathering a pool of intelligentsia, a think-tank of individuals from all walks of life who can contribute towards the shaping of better schooling environment for today’s children.

“Just think about education. Two or three years of your life may not be much in a whole lifetime, but if spent with children those may be an experience of a lifetime! You will see your life differently. Join a Teachers’ Lab today!” urges Vidya.

It may be well worth a shot.

—Archanaa R.



“Relief Foundation also believes in supporting young adults and any other willing, enthusiastic social entrepreneurs to start their own community schools.”

Swami Vivekananda in conversation with his disciple on Inner Power

Swami Vivekananda believed a country's future depends on its people, so he mainly stressed on 'man'. "Man-making is my mission"—that's how he described his teaching. Swami Vivekananda observed that humans could be classified into four basic types: those who were in constant activity, or the *worker*; those who were driven by their inner urge to achieve something in life, or the *lover*; those who tended to analyse the working of their minds, or the *mystic*; and those who weighed everything with reason, or the *philosopher*. Here is an inspiring conversation of Swamiji with his disciple, Sharatchandra Ckaravarthy on the special powers within oneself.

Swamiji: Well, say then, what is the sign of consciousness?

Disciple: Why, sir that indeed is conscious which acts through intelligence.

Swamiji: Everything is conscious which rebels against nature: there, consciousness is manifested. Just try to kill a little ant, even it will once resist to save its life. Where there is struggle, where there is rebellion, there is the sign of life, there consciousness is manifested.

Disciple: Sir, can that test be applied also in the case of men and of nations?

Swamiji: Just read the history of the world



and see whether it applies or not. You will find that excepting yours, it holds good in the case of all other nations. It is you only who are in this world lying prostrate today like inert matter. You have been hypnotized. From very old times, others have been telling you that you are weak, that you have no power, and you also, accepting that, have for about a thousand years gone on thinking, "we are wretched; we are good for nothing." (Pointing to his own body) This body also is born of the soil of your country; but I never thought like that. And hence you see how, through His will, even those who always think of us as low and weak, have done and

are still doing me divine honour. If you can think that infinite power, infinite knowledge, and indomitable energy lie within you, and if you can bring out that power, you also can become like me.

Disciple: Where is the capacity in us to think in that way, sir? Where is the teacher or preceptor who from our childhood will speak thus before us and make us understand? What we have heard and have learnt from all is that—the object of having an education nowadays is to secure some good job.

Swamiji: For that reason is it that we have come forward with quite another precept and example. Learn that truth from us, understand it, realize it, and then spread that idea broadcast, in cities, towns, and villages. Go and preach to all, "Arise, awake, sleep no more; within each of you there is the power to remove all wants and all miseries. Believe this, and that power will be manifested." Teach this to all, and with that spread among the masses in plain language the central truths of science, philosophy, history, and geography. I have a plan to open a centre with the unmarried youths; first of all I shall teach them, and then carry on the work through them.

Disciple: But that requires a good deal of money. Where will you get this money?

Swamiji: What do you talk! Isn't it man that makes money? Where did you ever hear of money making man? If you can make your thoughts and words perfectly at one, if you can, I say, make yourself one in speech and action, money will pour in at your feet of itself like water.

Disciple: Well, sir, I take it for granted that money will come, and you will begin that good work. But, what will that matter? Before this also many great men carried out many good deeds. But where are they now? To be sure, the same fate awaits the work which you are going to start. Then what is the good of such an endeavour?

Swamiji: He who always speculates as to what awaits him in future accomplishes nothing whatsoever. What you have understood as true and good—just do that at once! What's the good of calculating what may or may not befall in future? The span of life is so short. Can anything be accomplished in it if you go on forecasting and computing results. God is the only dispenser of results; leave it to Him to do all that. What have you got to do with it? Don't look that way, but go on working.

—Excerpted from 'The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda'

To belong - dimensions that stimulate the feeling

A Series on 'Belongingness...nurturing people connect.'

It is one thing for the social entrepreneur to feel passionate about the vision and the organization. It is totally a different thing for an employee who is working with the social entrepreneur to feel the same. For a social entrepreneur, everything that the person does revolves around the idea or the outcome that they dream of day in and day out. But, for an employee this may be occupying a major part of his day but not his entire life. In spite of all the differences, when an idea becomes an organization for the implementation of the idea, then it is essential for the social entrepreneur to realize the independent–dependent relationship that all of us exist in. While choices and actions may be independent it is strongly connected to the context which consists of several factors making a lot of choices and actions that are dependent on them. Therefore, in order to see if the organization is seeing and working in one direction, the feeling of belongingness becomes a crucial factor. Does each of them feel connected and what is stimulating this connection? This is a pertinent question to support those dimensions that connect and strengthen the same.

About a decade back, we had instituted a doctoral study on feeling of belongingness to understand the profile of this generation employees who live in the world largely directed by technology. In the last five

years, several researches have shown that the profile of the younger generation entering work organizations is very different than that of the previous generation. In most organizations of today four generations exist and are in interaction



with each other to run the organization – the Builders (1925-1945); Baby Boomers (1946–1964); Gen X (1965-1977) and the Gen Y (1978–1996); to be expected are the Gen Z (1997–2010). Each of these generations has a profile different from the other generation. In line with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, in India, while the Builders entered at the basic and Baby Boomers at safety levels, the Gen X though entered at the belonging levels, are interacting and are at par with the western counterparts at esteem levels. (Espinoza, 2011).

Generation X believes, "work is a thing you do to have a life (work doesn't define their life)," (Nagle, 1999). Gen Y on the other hand seems to want a work-life balance with flexibility to define who they are in their job. Main findings of a research report (Summer 2004) by Common Purpose UK, Company Limited titled Searching for something - exploring the career traps and ambitions of young people reveals that:

- Young, talented workers feel trapped in their current jobs and are leaving them in pursuit of more fulfilling work
- The primary thing keeping many

young people in their current jobs is their debts. They feel they have to stay put until they are cleared.

- Young people want careers that add purpose to their lives as well as fulfill their potential at work. Employers who fail to accommodate and listen to these wider ambitions risk leaving their high fliers feeling frustrated and de-motivated.
- A quarter-life crisis is a reality for young people today, and is a time when they evaluate what they're doing and what they want from life.
- The danger age when employers stand to lose their most talented employees is 30, when young people are most likely to feel most disillusioned with their careers.
- A job that provides young people with purpose in their lives is a top priority for both men and women, with 83 and 89 per cent agreeing respectively.

The study also found that those who were not getting satisfaction at work were hitting a 'quarter-life crisis'. Searching for something concluded that employers had to accommodate young workers' wider ambitions or risk of losing them by the age of 30. "We see young people who are searching for some sort of meaning in life and if you can't align their values with the organization they might leave," said Julia Middleton, the group's chief executive. The employees who are willing to work with the social entrepreneur therefore join searching for meaning for themselves and it becomes very crucial to identify and

provide space for the same. That will also enhance the feeling of belongingness to the organization.

Through the doctoral study, we have identified nine dimensions that affect the feeling of belongingness:

1. Clarity on Organizational Vision
2. Professionalism in functioning
3. Rewards
4. Alignment of individual and organizational values
5. Sense of Ownership
6. Exploration and development of potential
7. Material comforts
8. Emotional satisfaction
9. Value for contribution

These nine dimensions contribute in not only enhancing the organizational climate but also in enabling a sense of identification, commitment and well being of the employees. The human capital is a critical factor that is alive and real in an organization working for the social cause. So any enhancement in their well being directly contributes to the growth of the organization. Fulfillment at the core level and ongoing evolution keeps the employee satisfied at a deeper level and decreases the need to move and therefore attrition.

In the forthcoming series, we will explore each of these dimensions in detail and its impact on the organization.

Reflections:

- In my organization, how many of these dimensions have I paid attention to?

—Kalpana Sampath, PhD.



Battle of the Buffet 2012

India's 'giving festival' is held every year in the week containing October 2 and is known as the Joy of Giving week. This year, the Joy of Giving week is celebrated from 2nd to 8th October, 2012.

CSIM and Oriental Cuisines Pvt. Ltd. is organizing the 'Battle of the Buffet' (BOB), a unique fundraising opportunity for NGOs, on 6th October, 2012 at Chennai Trade Centre, Nandambakkam. We invite your organization to participate in this event and take this opportunity to imbibe the spirit of giving amongst Chennaites.

'Battle of the Buffet' is a fundraiser for NGOs in Tamil Nadu. BOB 2011 raised 1.4 crores of rupees benefitting 51 NGOs across Tamil Nadu. Over 27 corporate houses sponsored the event and 2000 guests were served a lavish buffet by Chennai's top 4 & 5 star restaurants.

The evening saw celebrities endorsing and participating in the event, and well-known artistes perform. Donors, who donated Rs 5,000 each to a cause of their choice, were entitled to 1 donor pass.

This year, Sri. S.P. Balasubramaniam, musician, has agreed to perform live for the audience and over 10 leading hotels—Taj, The Park, Saveria, Raintree, Le Meridien, Courtyard Marriott, GRT Hotels and Resorts, China Town, Radisson, and Oriental cuisines have committed to participate.

If you wish to participate in this event, please contact us at 9884700029 or 9282205123 or 42805365. For more information about the event, please visit www.battleofbuffet.org.

—Marie Banu



“I am sure The Netherlands can assist India in the realization of its CSR ambition.”

Bob Hiensch,
Ambassador of The
Netherlands to India
shares with
Marie Banu
the development
programs supported
by the Netherlands
Government



Bob Hiensch, is the Ambassador of The Netherlands to India and also accredited to Nepal and Bhutan. He served in many diplomatic positions around the world: Hong Kong, Paris, at the UN in New York and as ambassador to Israel before he arrived in India in November 2007. Ambassador Hiensch is married and has five children (four daughters and a son) who live in different parts of the world: Monaco, The Netherlands, Brussels and New York.

The Dutch – all 16 and a half million of them – live in 41,526 square kilometers, just a little larger than Kerala. This makes The Netherlands one of the world’s most densely populated countries. Less well known is that The Netherlands or Holland as it is often called, has the twelfth largest economy in the world, and ranks sixteenth in GDP.

Since 1947, Indo-Dutch relations have been excellent, marked by strong economic and commercial ties, based on foundation of shared democratic ideals, pluralism, multiculturalism and rule of law. Indo-Dutch relations have been multi-faceted and encompass close cooperation in various areas including political, economy, academics and culture. Since the early 1980s, the Dutch Government has identified India as an important economic partner. The relations underwent further intensification after India’s economic liberalization in the 1990s with growing recognition of India as an attractive trade and investment partner.

In an exclusive interview, Bob Hiensch shares with Marie Banu the development programs supported by the Netherlands Government.

What is the drive that involves you in social work activities?

As you know, embassies are not social work institutions. So, for an ambassador to get involved in social work has to be a personal inspiration. For me it follows from my conviction that civilization is ‘concern for others’: that is friendship, compassion, and responsibility. This has been the major driving force in my life.

Regretfully, The Netherlands and India do not have a development cooperation program anymore. For many years India was the largest recipient of Dutch development funds worldwide, but this was stopped in 2003 at the request of the Indian government. But, on a personal and very small scale the embassy still is active.

One of the fields that is very important for me is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The Dutch government gives a very high priority on corporate social responsibility, both domestically as well as globally. The Embassy is very focused on CSR and we work closely together with the Indian government and other Indian partners in this field.

What are the programmes supported by the Netherlands Government in other developing countries?

That is quite extensive. We have 15 partner countries in the world and our main focus are on food security; water; sexual and reproductive health; safety and security; as well as the rule of law in the partner countries. We work in countries where we feel that our approach can really make a difference.

Through international NGOs, your government does support programmes in India. Can you tell us more about this?

We have around 33 Dutch NGOs that are active in India in one way or the other. Some are very big like ICCO and HIVOS while some are as small, more private organizations. They work on different programmes, mainly in the field of humanitarian issues, education and women rights. The total funding of these

NGOs for India is estimated at around 48 million euros per year.

What has been your experience working with the Indian NGOs?

Generally speaking, they are very professional. We have hardly had any bad experience. Of course, we do have small points where we disagree, but generally I find them to be devoted to the task and focused on what they want to achieve. They work mainly on women rights, minorities’ issues, and children education.

Of the social issues in India, which do you think should be addressed with priority?

One of the most worrying issues is the degradation of the environment, especially the pollution of rivers and waterways. Water will be a crucial issue in the future development of India.

You mentioned CSR: what are India and The Netherlands doing together in this field?

The embassy has worked closely together with the ministry of Corporate Affairs in realizing a Memorandum of Understanding on CSR between the Indian and Netherlands governments that was signed in Delhi last year. It’s the only MOU on CSR that the Indian government has with a foreign government. It’s a very important achievement for us, because it gives us a good platform to discuss CSR issues with India and to exchange expertise on CSR and corporate governance. We now have a working group which met in Delhi early this year, and we will meet again in The Netherlands in November 2012.

In the last five years I have seen a clear change for the better, especially since the new minister of Corporate Affairs took office after the elections of 2009. The attitude changed from being rather reluctant to actively promoting corporate social responsibility.

What are the CSR programmes that the Embassy is supporting?

Our embassy has interacted with important Indian influential think tanks, employers’ associations, community organizations and government officials in this field. We have organized several round tables, seminars and trainings on CSR to enhance the dialog on the different CSR principles and to showcase the system that The Netherlands already has in place. We also used the opportunities that Ministerial trade missions gave us to discuss CSR more in depth with Indian and Dutch officials and companies.

We do expect the Dutch companies to act responsible when they operate internationally and the embassy helps them in this. We have very good examples of Philips and Unilever in India, whose CSR policies are exemplary. I am sure The Netherlands can assist India in the realization of its CSR ambition.

Editorial

**Latha Suresh
Marie Banu**