

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Pride creates division between people whether at home, or work, or any serving environment. When we go through our day with pride as our guide we remain focused on ourselves. This makes us competitive, attention-seeking, narcissistic, and obsessed. Pride is not a new attitude and does not create respect.

Well, then what is that attitude that wins respect? The answer is 'Humility'. It is a virtue!

An attitude of humility is one of the most significant predictors of someone who is respected. It is the quality of keeping one's self under control. The difference in someone who's humble lies in their ability to choose between doing something for the praise of others or for their own experience.

When you see the people around you, you don't usually see their shadow outlined by each of their achieved goals and successes; instead you see them for their kindness, humor, and intelligence that lives in their heart.

A humble person is the master of himself. He avoids attracting the attention of others. He is thoughtful because he is not self-centered, has consideration for other's views, and is even tempered. He consults others and seeks their advice. He is not over-riden by others' views, but draws his own conclusions. He is gentle and well mannered.

The best of life lessons can be learnt from the social change agents who have shown the world the power of humility. Let's learn from them and practice it in our everyday lives.

—Marie Banu

EDITORIAL

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

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Expect or Accept or both?

“Today expect something good to happen to you no matter what occurred yesterday. Realize the past no longer holds you captive. It can only continue to hurt you if you hold on to it. Let the past go. A simply abundant world awaits.”

—Sarah Breathnach, *Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy*



“Today expect something good to happen to you no matter what occurred yesterday. Realize the past no longer holds you captive. It can only continue to hurt you if you hold on to it. Let the past go. A simply abundant world awaits.” Sarah Breathnach, *Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy*

Expect and Accept have a similar ring and yet are so different in their consequence in human life when not experienced together.

To me, expecting is creating a possibility, a future, tying my hope to a future happening. Accept means to receive what is there, the current, a happening in the present.

Often expecting without acceptance

leads to frustration, as one starts to idolize the future because the current is unwanted. The gap makes expecting more compulsive. Though the capacity to expect keeps us moving forward, without exercising the capacity to accept, expecting becomes detrimental. It's like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole.

The quality of expecting can be far more empowering and value adding when it emerges from a creative spirit. This creative spirit is a blessing given by living in the clearing that acceptance gives.

We know when we expect, without acceptance we unknowingly create a “should” in our language, both when we speak and when we think.

“Should” is limiting and pulls down the value of expecting. It conveys finality, whereas life is uncertain. The “should” cements us to the expectation, giving little room for flexibility.

When we want to harvest the benefits of expecting, can we make “should into would?” Acceptance offers “would” to our language. Would you wake up early?; would you consider helping me? Versus you should be waking early; you should help me. Would as a word nourishes the expectation with the seed of willingness.

Acceptance creates acknowledgment. From here, expectations create positive shifts.

Yours Energetically

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

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

Setting the balance right

Volunteers have evolved into a strong and beneficial force, characterising trends in the development sector. From an individual level, some of them have managed to shed light on intricate issues, which were largely untouched by organisations before. Such is their focus and potential, encouraging many more passionate individuals to join the force. Ms Yuvaneshwari, Co-Founder of 'Chottu Ki Education' in Hyderabad, strongly believes that volunteering can help correct the imbalance in society. "One must start exercising social responsibility from the day they realise that they should do something for the society. It must be a part of one's routine life," she says.

Yuvaneshwari has completed her Masters in Pharmacy from Chennai and is presently working with Dr Reddy's Lab in Hyderabad. Having grown up with elders who always tried to help unknown people, she also wanted to follow suit. She began to identify opportunities in her routine life. As a student she visited homes for the aged and orphanages and organised many one-time activities. She also coordinated celebration of festivals in these homes along with her friends. These activities encouraged her to do more for the society on a long term basis.

Soon after studies, she joined the RK Pharmaceuticals as Scientist, where she worked for four years before moving to Hyderabad in 2016. The company also engaged her as a volunteer in their CSR programmes.

"I became the CSR point of contact for an NGO called Bhumi and organised all the activities for them. I also taught Science to underprivileged children in shelter homes. Soon, I was coordinating projects across Tamil Nadu and other states. I was also their Hyderabad City Coordinator for few months", she says.

Yuvaneshwari is grateful to Bhumi for the skills it has instilled in her. "As a new girl in the city of Hyderabad, I was taken aback by the scale of child beggars I saw on the streets. I was very disturbed and wanted to connect them to social work organisations that worked for them. When I learnt that there were none, I got even more disturbed. I travelled every weekend to study about children's lives and the possible support they could receive. This is a very challenging sector where no immediate results could be seen. Besides, the fact that interventions have to be long term, the uncertainty of outcomes was another impediment. With no other organisation working for this cause, I decided to start my own," she explains.

Yuvaneshwari established Chottu Ki Education (CKE) in March 2016 along with Madhavi to support the education of child beggars in Hyderabad. She followed a complete volunteer-based



model that would allow development at every stage, as needs presented. "Given the dynamics of life in urban slums and the desperation of parents to bring an extra rupee into the family's earnings, CKE could only start with education for small classes so that it did not disturb their occupation," says Madhavi, Co-Founder of CKE. The two of them invested a lot of time and energy in studying this community. After learning that the community they wanted to work with was not forced to beg and was not controlled by a mafia, the duo felt confident of penetrating into the communities.

Medical camps were used as an entry point and a predesigned questionnaire was used to gather information about children's lives. As expected, most of them lied about their children's schooling. With a survey tool helping them to identify the density of migrant population, they could complete an ethnographic analysis of the community

concerned. With adequate knowledge about the community, they began to build rapport and soon influenced the parents to weekend classes.

The classes were planned early in the morning for children, when they had nothing else to do. While gathering the group was difficult at first, educating a heterogeneous group was a challenge.

With the help of friends from other organisations, like Teach for India, suitable content was prepared and delivered in the sessions. The team experimented a lot with content delivery so that children are made eligible to attend age appropriate classes in mainstream schools. Children were assessed on the basis of structured observations and interactions, instead of standardised tests.

Once the bridge courses were completed, children were enrolled in government schools that had a residential facility, so that the children did not drop out of school or get back to begging.

Five children from the Kukatpally Housing Board area were enrolled in a government school and follow up visits showed good progress. However, parents of the children wanted them to go to regular schools so that they could be sent for begging in the evenings. "We wanted to make sure that there was no way for the children to get back to begging, but parents could not manage with their meagre earnings. We were

baffled. Fortunately, during the visit of Mr Donald Trump's daughter's visit an order from the City Corporation to remove all beggars from the streets came in. This was a breather. As parents feared that police might take their children away, they did not encourage their child to engage in begging in the evenings," says Yuvaneshwari.

Encouraged to identify opportunities that every such situation brought along, the team is now gearing up to engage Principals of government schools in Miyapur - their next area of operation. In preparation to expand operations during weekdays too, the team is now working out a model to engage retired school teachers and other interested volunteers.

"I owe it to CSIM for teaching me the process of cashing into new opportunities and scaling up to new areas. I enrolled in the Social Entrepreneurship Outlook Program to build new contacts and networks. This course changed my perspective. I began to think in terms of operating in a structured manner in order to achieve a strong impact. Besides the knowledge and skills that will guide CKE's path, the bonding between passionate individuals is a gift from CSIM, which I will value for life. We help each other in every little way possible and that once again, emphasises the power of volunteering in setting the balance right,"

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Leader & Leadership Matters...

10. B. Sensitivity in relationships : A Culture of respect and togetherness



“Happiness comes from relationship.

When there is happiness, there is peace. When there is peace we can sleep properly.

When we have good sound sleep, we perform best and all who come in touch with us are happy. This maintains good relationship. So, sensitivity is an integral part to maintain relationship”

—Madhav Prasad Kalla

Last month we discussed the importance of sensitivity and the role it plays as a Leadership attribute. An attribute like sensitivity can only be best understood by talking to a person who lives it day in and day out as a part of his life at home as well as a Leader of his organization. We chose to speak to Shri Madhav Prasad Kalla, whose profile as rated by Life Orientation Instrument (LOI) showed a very high score for sensitivity. He has been highly spoken of, for his ability to provide for others knowing what they need. My own personal experience of fixing up time with him and his gentle ways of accepting and honoring the commitment spoke a lot of the kind of person he is.

Shri Madhav Kalla, is an engineering graduate in Computer Science from Bangalore University, after which he pursued his Master of Business Administration from Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia. He hails from a business community based in Khammam in the State of Andhra Pradesh. He was born into a prominent business family in Khammam which has more than three decades of rich experience dealing in a wide ranging businesses such as Electrical and Electronics Goods, Wholesale distribution of Mobile Handsets, Steel Dealers, Cold Storages and Parboiled Rice Mills meeting to both local and export requirements. He is the driving force behind the above ventures with hands-on knowledge in Information Technology and Modern techniques of finance. With his burning desire to expand the business overseas, Shri Madhav has tested his business acumen in Australia by starting a chain of service stations in 1997. Starting off with first Gas Station “FREEDOM FUELS” in 2002, the group today has in its hold several Gas Stations both Freehold and Leased. He has diversified his business interests into Web Development and Online E-Commerce Solutions apart from Real Estate too. Shri Madhav comes from a big joint family. He is the youngest of all. He was born affluent and they had many properties rented. Their oldest tenant was 80years when he was 48 years old.

Madhavji, thank you for willing to share with us your life perspectives regarding sensitivity in relationships. Can you tell me what you think is sensitivity and some examples from your life?

He says, “Sensitivity is respecting others and it is important in our family right from beginning. Giving value to every person was taught and there was no differentiation as a human being. I am here because of the people; whether organization or people, both are passion, there is no difference. In a

joint family, being sensitive to each other feelings and emotions is most important. Happiness comes from relationship. We cannot satisfy people with money. In our home we give respect to everyone; be it a driver, a maid, or an employee; all are treated as equals. Therefore, people will die for us and will continue to be with us forever. Sensitivity is the one that sustains a joint family through the sacrifices elders make for others. When elders get selfish, automatically the family falls and disintegrates.”

There are many examples that Shri Madhav can quote. It is very interesting to keep listening to his life stories. Some of the key ones from our discussion that brought out the true meaning of sensitivity were -

- “I live in Banjara hills which is an elite society space. My kid comes home in a Ola taxi and the driver was very touched when my kid enquired if he had change and respectfully spoke to him. The usual experience of the cab drivers are meeting arrogant youngsters unconcerned of others. So, the cab driver made it a point to come in and tell me I have brought up my son with sensitivity.”
- “When my son went to his friend’s house, he took the blessings of the parents and grandparents by bowing down to their feet, the Indian way. They were very surprised at the way my son has been brought up to respect our culture. This sensitivity of respecting is a part of DNA now.”
- “While traveling in train, my daughter once got very friendly with elderly couple who were co-passengers. They were in 80’s and my daughter was absolutely comfortable interacting with them and taking care of them. She showed sensitivity in her actions.”
- “Once my brother informed me one of our oldest tenant passed away. 56 years some people have been with us, renting our property. So I decided that we will honor all people who are more than 10years with us as a tenant and we continue to do so.”
- “Once we had to modify and rebuild a commercial complex that had been very old. All tenants had been nearly 40years with us. They all cooperated. We pulled the building down, rebuilt and gave it back to them again. They all remained with us and in 50 years we have never lost a single relationship.”

Shri Madhav opines, handling relationships is a lot of due diligence. It is about giving respect to relationship than money. He says, “If a tenant can make money he can pay rent. If he is not paying

rent, it means, it is not affordable for him. Sometimes it’s just a phase and we need to support. Real fight happens because of money. So we give a long rope before any serious decision is taken and enough chances are given along with whatever support we can provide. Helping people grow is more important than just paying us rent. They are not mere investment. They are real people and real relationships.”

Madhavji, I am really overwhelmed with the kind of experiences that you are sharing. How and when did this sensitivity as a value deepen in you?

“It has been developed from family through my elder brother. We are 7 brothers and 1 sister. When we once went for a walk together we overheard a neighbor mentioning that my brother is a very good example to show what a family is and how it has to be taken care of. My mom is very caring and sensitive person. She taught us all brothers how to take care of people. We are 38 members in the family and she knows what each of them need and she diligently takes care. My father was like a lion. Very strong person. But the first and the second brother played the key role in ensuring we are all in it together.



The additional support factor is that all our marriages at home are arranged and we have ensured that we know the family well and they suit our need to be together. If anyone spoke of money first, we will choose not to relate to them. One of my nephew and the girl he loved, waited for nearly 10 years to find the right opportunity, courage and conviction to share their love with us. He visited all the six families to convince them why she was the right girl for the family. The entire family got together and supported his choice whole heartedly. There have been times when one of my brother had to take some tough stand to protect the interest of the family and togetherness. He sacrificed and stayed with the family. We have always valued everybody’s happiness over self-happiness.



The friendship and togetherness shared by the women in my family goes a long way in sustaining sensitivity. Once in 2016, three of us brothers and spouse went for a tour in Europe. At the end of the tour, the hotel staff assumed the women were sisters and we are their spouses. They wouldn't believe they were co-sisters. That's the kind of understanding that has been developed amongst them."

Shri Madhav shares that all his 6 brothers, had stayed in Khammam and no one had moved out. He being the youngest, wanted to do something different; but at the same time, not disturb the family. He wanted to come out of comfort zone. He came to Hyderabad initially and then in 2000 got permanent residency in Australia and began his company BOSS – Business Oriented Software Solutions. Then he started construction and retail business in Australia and India. But in 2007, he came back to India and decided to live in Hyderabad and visit Australia for 3 weeks every quarter. Due to the power of relationship orientation, he opines he is able to manage his organization in two countries hassle free and growing steadily.

Madhavji, tell me with the amount of real estate properties that you handle, have you never had litigation or issues? What is the role of anger and upset in sensitivity according to you?

"Oh, yes, we have had few cases that had to be handled in court. One of my brother is an advocate and he says, once you go to court, there is a loser and a winner. The loser will cry in the court and the winner cries at home; it is better to deal things with sensitivity and handle it out of court. Valuing people more than ego is critical. There are times, people get angry and upset. But we should not feed anger. At the Top management level, we all know we should not become a bottle neck because of our emotions. One of my brother has a quick temper. But, we respect him and give priority to what causes the anger and handle the emotion. We never reject the person or allow him to reject anyone. Constant coaching and counselling helps. We all support each other when the emotions goes out of context."

Team spirit and team motivation is the mantra for Shri Madhav. After going to Australia, he also started fuel stations and now there are over 30 of them. The CEO, Shri Krishnaprasad Bodla is his classmate from 4th grade in school. It is a longtime friendship built on trust and understanding. Nine top management team manage the business. Even when some of the businesses have to be sold or reinvested, Shri Madhav looks at how to support and grow people internally. He believes that without loyalty and commitment, no business can grow. Even when there is a loss in business, he looks into the person and his capability than make a decision based on the money lost. He shares that he would always honour and respect the commitment of the person. He follows the principle of understand and identify what people need rather than what has to be given or not given in a standardized way.

Can you share with us what beliefs govern and enhance sensitivity in you?

Shri Madhav shared some interesting beliefs and perspectives.

- If it is wrong, it is wrong; if it is right, it is right, irrespective of the person, position and implication. The idea is to cut down the ego and not feed it. Everyone is a role model and it is never who is wrong; it is always what is wrong and how it has to be rectified.
- Everyone in the family gets the same money; from the eldest to the youngest as the first slot. For the next slot they will have to give the complete accounting on where it was spent and the reason why they need the second slot. There is no funding without justification. All finance is held by one brother and he manages all the accounts from the central office.
- Respect is foremost and whenever disrespect is experienced or seen, it is cut down at the tiniest level and the cause for disrespect is identified and addressed.
- Every young person is groomed and built for the business. Sometimes they are challenged and pushed to perform. Ego and over confidence is bashed if it shows its ugly head.

Shri Madhav shares, "When I completed my engineering and joined the team, I was even asked to serve coffee and tea to the members at the meetings. I was once asked to go to Hyderabad 17 times to resolve a case that could have been handled over one phone call by my eldest brother. I was angry and upset at the way I had to work initially, until I heard him say at the end of solving the problem, now my brother can handle anything given to him and he knows all the possible loopholes to be plugged! I had never seen that my internship was on and I was being nurtured for a bigger role later on."

Are there any consistent practices that you adopt in your family and organizations to make people feel valued and understand each other better?

There are several practices that are followed. First of all it is a family culture that runs even in my organization.

In Australia:

- Every Easter, a team of 36 people go on a vacation for 4 nights 5 days with their family and have a get together time.
- There are Christmas parties organized in the company
- Shri Madhav meets the level 2 and 3 employees every six months for half a day. Usually, gifts are given to them and at times in gold and silver too appreciating their commitment and work. They have fairly large number of loyal employees.



In India:

- Diwali is celebrated in grand way. During Diwali time all the 7 brothers and family spend 1 night and 2 days together consistently for the last 13 years.
- Any other major festival like Ganesh Pooja is always done in one brother's house and the entire family get together. They have large courtyard and pot luck parties are periodically celebrated.

- All employees who have served 5 years and above are honored with gifts and recognition during the Dasher festival time in the organization.
- The key performers are recognized and appreciated in front of the entire organization gathering which makes them feel proud and happy.



"Last 6 generations there has been no partition in the property since every generation there was only one heir. In 2011, my father has thought of dividing the property amongst us. This was intended not to allow any fights after his time. I was very disturbed by this idea and through a friend, I decided to take outside help and let us work on staying together and strengthen ourselves. That is how the interventions and coaching support of Shri J M Radhakrishna, one of the leading Management consultant has been brought into the organization. We have also taken the route of training and development to keep the organization together."



According to Madhav, Sensitivity in relationships play a key role to make the people feel valued and be a part of team to show that there is a mutual co-existence without which organization and family cannot prosper together. It has deepened humility in him. Learning from family and bringing it to business has left behind large gifts of success and prosperity making Shri Madhav Kalla's life enriched and fulfilled as a Leader.

—Dr.Kalpana Sampath

Encouraging One Last Act of Kindness



Deesha Group and Deesha Education Foundation is an NGO based in Amravati District, Maharashtra, that focuses on educating the general public about organ donations, particularly eye donation. Their mission is to eradicate any form of preventable/treatable blindness in society. This organization is the brainchild of Swapnil Arun Gawande, who is also its Managing Trustee and Secretary.

Finding one's calling is no mean task. Some people spend entire lifetimes looking for purpose, while some others find theirs, early on. Swapnil found his life's calling at the tender age of eight, following the tragic death of his childhood friend, who had corneal blindness. Swapnil's friend had been in a prolonged waiting list for an eye-transplant, when he fell ill with dengue and soon passed away. This incident left a lasting impression on Swapnil, who did not waste any time finding out more about both corneal blindness and dengue. He learnt from doctors that both of these conditions were curable and that with timely intervention, his friend could have been saved. Upon learning that

more than the disease itself, and it was the lack of infrastructure and awareness of available medical procedures that led to his friend's losing his life, Swapnil decided to do something to prevent this from happening to other families.

Swapnil began giving speeches at his school from 6th grade, laden with information about eye care and more importantly eye-donation. He persuaded his family to pledge their eyes for donation and even when struck with a second tragedy of losing his cousin, convinced his cousin's parents to donate the eyes of the deceased. However, that is when he realized that while there was a family willing to donate eyes, there were no eye-banks, in his home town of Amravati, that engages in harvesting these eyes. As eyes can only be donated within six to eight hours of death, having the nearest eye-bank more than four hours away by drive made it impossible for the donation to happen.

Swapnil thus resolved to set up an eye bank in Amravati district. Throughout his teen years, Swapnil routinely dedicated his time, talking at

schools, colleges, and various other platforms to encourage people to donate their eyes. He consulted with several doctors and requested them to join his organization to set up the necessary infrastructure to make eye donations and eye transplants available to people in every corner of the state.

In 2013, after years of hard work and tireless research, the first Deesha Eye Bank was opened in Amravati. Since then Deesha Eye Banks have opened up in Yavatmal, Washim and Buldhana districts of Maharashtra. All four eye banks provide 24/7 eye donation services in their respective regions. Deesha has also started an eye-transplant centre in association with Dr. Totey Eye Hospitals serving people from five districts around Amravati Division. Till date, Deesha Foundation has facilitated more than 3,500 eye donations across the state of Maharashtra. Around 700 of these have been directly donated to Deesha Eye Banks. "Roshani Zindagi Mein", the awareness and sensitization drive by Deesha has led to more than 4.5 lakh people to pledge their eyes for donation. In

order to remove the various misconceptions about eye-donations, Deesha organizes eye-camps for different target groups such as rickshaw drivers, local policemen, students and so on. On the whole, Deesha Group today serves a population of 12 lakh people and counting.

Deesha's eye bank services are largely managed by their enormous network of young volunteers who are located all over the country. While emphasizing on their commitment to the cause, Swapnil says, "Our group runs on donations and none of our trustees or senior management members are paid any honorarium. The entire money from these donations goes directly to the cause." Around 1800+ people are actively volunteering in Deesha regularly.

At a policy-making level, Deesha Foundation's recommendation of establishing a Cornea Distribution System for Maharashtra (CDSM) has been adopted by the Maharashtra state government. An online portal has been set up to facilitate the eye distribution across the state through online waiting list. A national eye-donation helpline- 989-989-8667 was recently set up, inaugurated by the chief minister of Maharashtra, Shri Devendra Fadnavis. This helpline number connects with the major eye banks across the country, thus making eye donation process hassle free for the deceased family. It also enables organizations like Deesha to respond promptly to families who are interested in donating eyes of their deceased kin. Through their eye-donation anthem, Deesha actively popularizes the helpline number in their campaigns.

Says Ashutosh Lakhe, an eye-transplant

beneficiary, "When I was in Class 10, I started losing my eyesight drastically. I could barely see at a distance of one foot through one eye and would just about manage to read, through the other. I was lucky I got a corneal transplant and that my eyesight was restored. Whereas earlier I was afraid to even take two steps on my own without my eyesight, now I'm travelling hundreds of

kilometers across the state, fulfilling my dreams, independently. The fact that I'm able to see the bright colours of this beautiful world due to one person's seemingly small but significant decision to donate their eyes, amazes me."

Deesha Group has garnered the appreciation of several key people in education, engineering, management, business and in governance. As Kiran Paturkar, a notable industrialist and President of Vidarbha Industrial Association, observes, "While blood donation has long gained social acceptance and people are unafraid to voluntarily give their blood to those in need, eye and other organ donations are still looked at with some trepidation. Deesha Foundation, through their excellent work in Maharashtra is making sure that Amravati becomes a model for the rest of the country with respect to making eye-donation just as simple and widely accepted." As a testimony to this paradigm shift, increasingly families have shown their willingness to donate the organs of their loved ones, with some donors being young children who sadly met with an early end.

Deesha is currently working on a chain of mobile eye-care units in Maharashtra and are working towards expanding the number of these low-cost units for easy access to eye care in rural areas. Work is also underway for the launch of Deesha Netralaya a multi-specialty charitable eye hospital in Amravati by 2021. Deesha Foundation has also started promoting and facilitating organ donations across the state.

Deesha Foundation has been awarded the GuideStar India's Transparency Award for their transparent services.

—Archanaa Ramesh

At a policy-making level, Deesha Foundation's recommendation of establishing a Cornea Distribution System for Maharashtra has been adopted by the Maharashtra State Government.

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RESURRECTING A POSITIVE ROLE FOR THE MUCH-MALIGNED NOTION OF 'SOCIAL CAPITAL'

Social capital describes the networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate cooperation within or among groups' (OECD, 2001)

I want to put out a call for the rehabilitation of what we understand by 'social capital'.

Recent criticism of the essential concept of social capital has caused people to cast it aside – considering it a redundant approach. Several influential academics on the left of the political spectrum have written books and articles criticising social capital. Their criticism became particularly virulent at a time when the World Bank formed a social capital strategy in their assistance to developing countries.

In short, the main thrust of the criticism was that the notion of social capital was being used as a substitute for not materially helping populations. Communities were being told that... we know you are poor, downtrodden and disadvantaged but you have 'social capital' and you should be using that more.

In a way, the academic left was right in criticising the World Bank's application of a social capital approach – especially if it was used as a reason for not providing material help. But I think that the criticism threw the proverbial baby out with the bath water. Although many of my sympathies align with a criticism of the World Bank, I have a different view.

I think we have to take a less theoretical position regarding social capital and believe that it is very important if viewed in practical and pragmatic terms. It is more usefully understood by people working in social enterprises and third sector organisations when it is pulled out of academia and translated into real situations.

So why am I calling for a rethink of social capital now? It is mainly because I have been part of the CommonHealth Research Programme* whose aim was to research the links between the activities of social enterprises and health and well-being within communities and amongst individuals. It is looking at addressing health inequalities and how social enterprises can positively influence the upstream determinants of health even when such entities say nothing about health in their mission statements. The main determinants of health being... family, friends and communities; housing; education and skills; good work; money and resources; physical surroundings (Keeping us well: How non-health charities address the social determinants of health; Boswell, K., Joy, I., Lamb, C., 2017, New Philanthropy Capital).

The results of the CommonHealth Research Programme are just beginning to emerge and I am struck that many of the findings would appear to be linked to



what I have always understood as being 'social capital'. (More information on this research can be found in the Briefing Papers and journal articles.)

So, what are we talking about when we use the term?

I think that one of the best and most comprehensive definitions of social capital came from the CONSCISE Project (2000 -2003). This project defined it as...

"...resources within communities which are created through the presence of high levels of trust; reciprocity and mutuality; shared norms of behaviour (values); shared commitment and belonging; and both formal and informal social networks all of which may be used productively by individuals and groups to facilitate actions to benefit individuals, groups and community more generally."

This definition is more useful, in my view, as it emphasises that social capital is made up of a number of interlinking elements – not just one thing. The CONSCISE Project then goes on to argue that understanding and applying social capital in one's approach is heuristic – that is, you learn from doing, not by talking about what you think you are doing.

Returning to CommonHealth – the project's main hypothesis is: are social and community enterprises, by their nature, approach and activities, good and effective at improving health and well-being for individuals and communities – either directly or indirectly?

On the community level here are some of the emerging findings...

Community enterprises can bring the community together through running a

safe, community space as a focal point of the community, and something that offsets loneliness. In rural and remote areas, a community based social enterprise provides a hub or meeting place where local people can meet and expand their social networks. The more often they do this, relationships and friendships can deepen, strengthening trust between people make a more cohesive and stronger community.

The 'good work' of the social enterprise, mainly working to benefit other people, further develops one's sense of belonging to an area and sharing concern for a particular locality.

Sharing experiences and belief in what a social enterprise is trying to do strengthens the sense of belonging to an area and make the surroundings a better place to live and work.

Social enterprises provide opportunities to volunteer locally around the principle of mutuality and helping each other.

On top of this social enterprises – particularly those that are community owned – can provide a vehicle for local social change and development in the area. They can provide the role as a geographical 'anchor organisation'. They may also boost the local economy through providing employment, helping with training and aspiring to be as self-sufficient as possible.

I feel there is currently a need to resurrect the role of social capital in our understanding around concepts such as community and individual health and well-being.

If we accept that there are correlations between elements of social capital and some of the emerging findings around the upstream determinants of health, then we are again confronted with the

knotty problem of how do we account for, or 'measure', the changes in these elements.

I have argued in a previous blog that social enterprises should focus much more on the 'social' side of what they do. Their existence should be geared to benefit people at the same time as not adversely affecting the environment and using economic activity to achieve these ends.

If this is the case, I think that social enterprises should be looking seriously and overtly at the degree to which they contribute to social capital. This would mean putting in place how they build trust between people and organisations; how they encourage reciprocal working and mutuality; how they state and then live up to their values; how they support a commitment to a community and a sense of belonging; and how they actively create connectedness through informal and formal social networks.

I would also take this further and say that social enterprises could, and perhaps should, take a social capital approach. This might mean separating out the composite elements of social capital and examining how what social enterprises do and how they do it can contribute to strengthening social capital.

Lastly, rather than attack the notion of social capital and try and replace it with other less contested terms, such as community cohesion, connectedness, social inclusion, anti-loneliness, and so on, we should arguably be embracing social capital making it a central tenet of what social enterprises are all about.

—Alan Kay
Social Audit Network, UK
www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk

Sheroes of Change

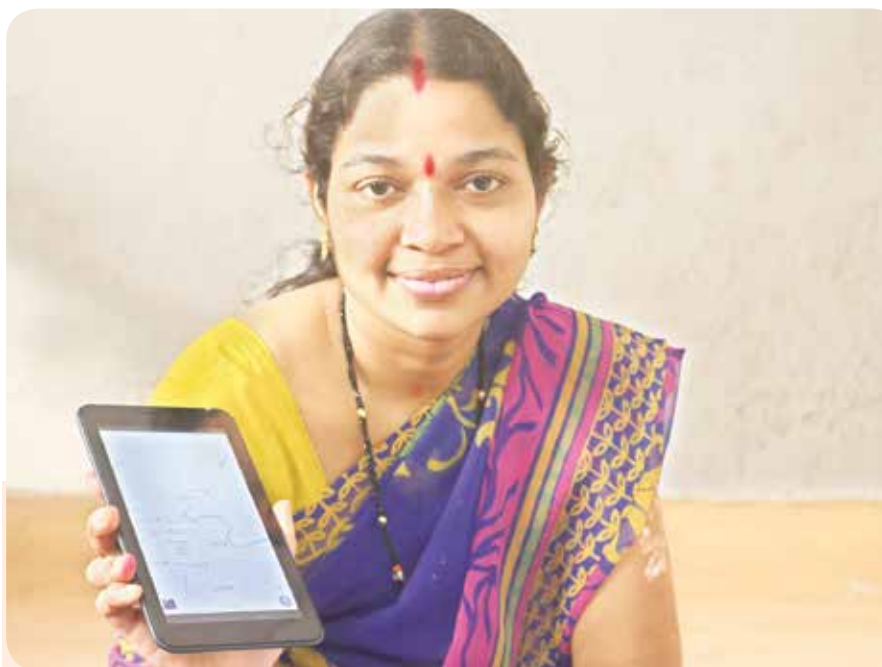
Riding the tides of change is never easy, but doing so in the midst of concrete financial pressures as well as intangible societal pressures would require superhuman strength. That is what the Sheroes of this story are undertaking, on an everyday basis. Enabling them, encouraging them and giving them the confidence to move on and create a new life for themselves, is Srujna Trust, an NGO that helps transform helpless young women into self-reliant, confident and financially secure individuals.

Srujna Charitable Trust was started in the year 2011, in Mumbai, by Vaishali Shah and Jyotika Bhatia, two dynamic young women, hailing from diverse professional backgrounds, united by a singular cause. As a student of vocational education working with rescued victims of human trafficking, Jyotika Bhatia realized that shelter homes did not have the wherewithal to provide these individuals with any sustainable livelihood solutions. She together with Vaishali Shah, piloted a jewelry making program with 30 rescued victims and helped sell the products through various channels. Encouraged by the success of this endeavor, they conceived Srujna as a livelihood development organization that not only focused on skill training, but also in providing marketing platforms and networking opportunities for women from underprivileged backgrounds. Today Srujna is spread across India in all the major metro cities such as Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, and Ahmedabad, impacting lives of over 6,000 women.

When asked how Srujna identifies its beneficiaries, Jyotika says, "Srujna partners with grassroot organizations such as self-help groups, artisan groups and NGOs working with women in need. The partner organizations are more than willing to work towards identifying women whose economic, educational and social situations are particularly dire and select them for Srujna's training programs. A rigorous screening procedure follows and eligible women are selected." Apart from victims of trafficking and/or abuse, Srujna also identifies women with disabilities and those whose families have, for one reason or another lost their only means of income.

Srujna undertakes three major interventions:

1. Udyog- providing market linkages in the form of stalls at exhibitions, custom work orders, job opportunities etc. for those beneficiaries who can use them
2. Kala- skill training in tailoring, paper products and jewellery making to rescued victims of human trafficking residing in shelter homes
3. Aajivika- capacity building



Srujna is spread across India in all the major metro cities such as Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, and Ahmedabad, impacting lives of over 6,000 women

workshops on such topics as upskilling, quality management, inventory management, English speaking and digital literacy

Srujna has so far trained over 800 women in professional skills and has organized over 425 NGO Melas across India. It has provided market linkages to over 6000 women across the country, generating jobs worth INR 1.6 million.

"The major challenge in all this is to get continuous work for these women so that they can earn an income" says Jyotika, adding that, "we are constantly attempting to bring various stakeholders to keep up a regular source of income for our beneficiaries"

As if the efforts of training and market familiarization weren't complex enough, the challenges that pertain to chauvinistic mindsets prevalent within families are also very much a part of Srujna's everyday work in the communities too. Says Jyotika, "The perception that, even if they are 'allowed' to work, women are supposed to carry the entire weight of household responsibilities as well, can be particularly challenging to deal with. As their responsibilities double, it becomes difficult for the women to keep up with the training schedules"

However, according to Jyotika, the process of transformation also tends to

be the most intense within the families. Once the revenue starts coming in steadily, husbands also change for the better, giving a hand in the household chores and in family duties. There are instances of families going from complete resistance in the initial days, to, later on offering complete support.

A classic example is the story of Laxmi Vishwakarma. Shortly after getting married, Laxmi and her husband had to leave her in-laws house and were left to fend for themselves on the streets. She resolved to earn for her family. She joined a local artisan group in her community which Srujna was supporting in terms of providing market contacts. Over a period of time she got promoted as the quality control supervisor of her group and has since been the sole bread winner for her family. She earns a regular income of INR 8000-10000/- per month and is putting her children through school. A short documentary on Laxmi is put up on Srujna's website, where she says emphatically, "Even though our family was broke, I was able to create a living for myself and my family."

A lot of Srujna's beneficiaries not only become highly skilled, self sufficient workers, but soon they engage in knowledge transfer and in facilitating this transition among even more women who have been through similar situations. Lalita Jadhav, another of Srujna's "Sheroes", took it upon herself to travel more than five hours everyday to a shelter home in Mumbai, where she trains women who have been rescued from trafficking. Kiran Badhe, a self-help group founder who got in touch with Srujna more than 6 years ago, is the sole earning parent in her family. She not only managed to put her daughters through engineering colleges, but also is on a mission to empower thousands of women in the areas of Vasai, Nalasopara and Virar areas in Mumbai. She has trained over 2000 women in her communities and has facilitated income-generation for over 500 women. She has her own NGO these days.

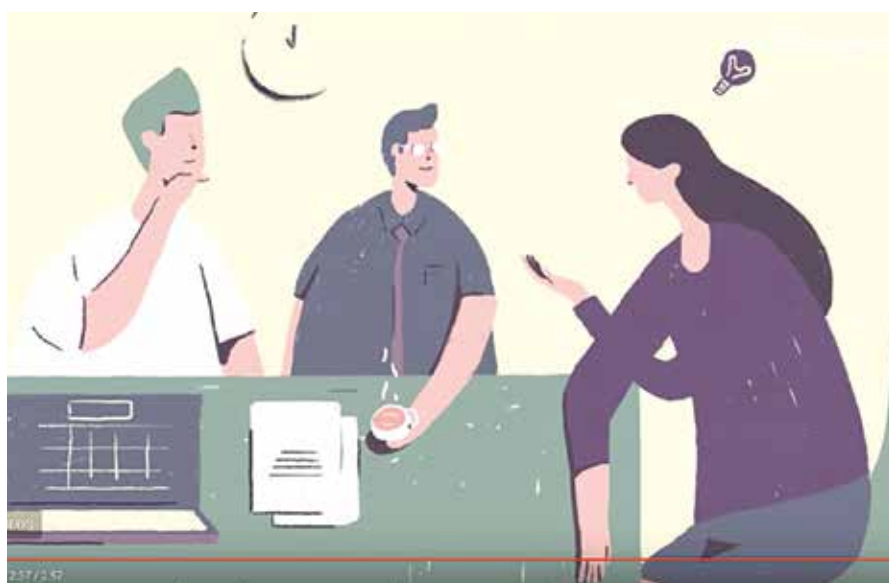
When asked about society's role in equalizing gender disparities, Jyotika ponders, "Today, India ranks rather poorly in several gender based indices, especially in the economic participation of women. As a developing nation, we ought to encourage women participation in economic activities. We as a society need to accept that the role of women extends beyond that of mother, wife and daughter."

What is your aspiration for Srujna's future, we ask. "We want to be India's largest platform for facilitating work for women in need," says Jyotika. Their contributions so far suggest that they may be well on their way to being just that.

— Archanaa Ramesh

A young caregiver's raw words to her father with Alzheimer's

No one taught Melissa how to feel when she watched her dad slowly slip away. Now, she shares her memories to inspire other young caregivers in their journey with dementia.



When Melissa's Dad was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's, she was only 14 years old.

It changed the family dynamics, and she was forced to grow up to take on the responsibility of a caregiver for her Dad. "Our roles reversed," she said. "I had to be the parent."

We tend to think of dementia as a condition that primarily affects older persons, and issues of early-onset are often overlooked, including its impact on family members.

For young caregivers like Melissa in Singapore where one in 10 people over 60 has dementia, the challenges they face are unique, especially with having to cope with the struggles of adolescence, alongside competing demands of school and caregiving.

Melissa is working to address this gap

through Project We Forgot, a community platform she kickstarted, which offers support for young caregivers of persons with dementia.

Melissa wished that she was more informed about her Dad's condition so that she could be a better caregiver, amidst having to come to terms with his memory loss and confusion.

"No one taught us how to feel when we watched you slowly slip away, or how to react when your memories started fading, and you stopped remembering who we were."

She wrote these words in a letter to her Dad more than ten years later. Had she known better as a teenager, perhaps there could have been more empathy and understanding.

There was no one she could confide in at school, seeing that there was hardly

any awareness about issues of dementia amongst her circle of friends and teachers.

With lessons learned from her own experience, Melissa hopes that young caregivers won't have to feel the same isolation like she did. Through Project We Forgot, they can access resources and be connected with others who are going through similar journeys.

At the same time, Melissa actively reaches out to different institutions around Singapore to help raise awareness and support for the needs of caregivers at school or the workplace.

Meaningful change can only happen when there's increased public education, she feels.

Reflecting on her journey, Melissa sees a large part of her Dad in who she is now, especially his entrepreneurial

spirit, which gave her the impetus to kickstart Project We Forgot.

"I hope that I'm doing you proud, Dad." She tells him as she ends her letter.

ABOUT PROJECT WE FORGOT

Project We Forgot in Singapore was set up to provide caregivers of persons with dementia with a space to express themselves and find support online. Offline, it has also given talks, held festivals and conducted outreach programmes on dementia and caregiving.

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



Sorrow



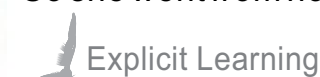
When *Buddha* was traveling from place to place, people gathered around him seeking advice. A young woman once came to him with great sorrow and pain in her heart. Her son had died and she could not contain her grief. She came to *Buddha* for solace. *Buddha* told her to go to the town and bring back a bowl of rice from a home that had seen no sorrow.

So she went from house to house saying “Can you give me a bowl of rice?”

“Yes”, the woman of the house would say.

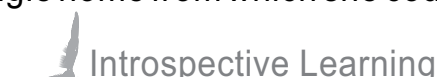
“But had there been any great sorrow in this home, I cannot accept your bowl of rice.”

So she went from house to house but could not find a single home from which she could accept a bowl of rice.



Explicit Learning

- A. There is no one who has not seen grief or sorrow.
- B. The woman, immersed in her sorrow, failed to realise that it was a part of life.
- C. Life and death are two sides of the same coin.



Introspective Learning

- A. How do I deal with separation?
- B. When immersed in my own sorrow, why do I fall to understand its universality?
- C. What causes sorrow in me?

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Centre for Social Initiative and Management

Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM) is a unit of Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani. It is a learning centre that promotes the concept of social entrepreneurship.

CSIM offers **training and consultancy to social enterprises** – for-profits and non-profits – to facilitate them to apply successful business practices and yet retain

their social mission. It also offers training and hand holding support to prospective social entrepreneurs and enable them to launch their social initiatives.

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

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

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“IF YOU MIND, YOU CAN!”

Padma Shri Girish Bharadwaj shares with Marie Banu his passion for rural development.



Shri Girish Bharadwaj is an Indian social worker often referred as Bridgeman of India for building around 137 low-cost suspension footbridges of varying spans and dimensions in various parts of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and also Odisha. He was conferred the Padma Shri award in 2017.

Girish hails from Sullia in Karnataka, and is a graduate in Mechanical Engineering from P.E.S. College of Engineering in Mandya.

He is the Founder-Secretary of Sneha Education Society of Sullia, which provides basic quality education in Kannada Medium.

In an exclusive interview, Girish Bharadwaj shares with Marie Banu his passion for rural development.

Your early days as a mechanical engineer?

After my graduation, in 1975, I was interested to work in a factory and was job-hunting. I wanted to be a white-collar employee, but my father persuaded me to set up a workshop in my village, where I grew up, and serve the rural community. Although I was disheartened at first, I realized that the villagers needed my service.

I engaged in general fabrication and repair of farm machinery. In the initial

years, I struggled for existence. Later, I ventured into gobar gas plants as I found that almost all farmers in my village and Taluk had cattle. This enterprise was fruitful.

What motivated you to engage in bridge construction?

While I lived on the Sullia, nearest town side of Aletty village, there were people living on the other side of the Payaswini River. They had only one boat, which could transport five people at a time.

In 1989, some villagers approached me and showed a picture of Lakshman Jhoola and asked me to construct a similar hanging bridge for their village. They mentioned that their boat was beyond repair and they were finding it difficult to commute. I explained that I was only a Mechanical engineer and not a Civil Engineer and therefore could not assist them.

An elderly friend of mine, hearing about this, told me “if you mind, you can”. This motivated me to explore civil engineering and from then on there is no looking back.

Can you share your first experience in constructing a bridge?

I went to Mangalore, which is about

90 kilometers away from my village, to buy some civil engineering books. The cover page of the book had a picture of the hanging bridge in it.

I studied this book and understood the nuances of building suspension bridges thoroughly. The challenge was in simplifying the design and making a footbridge. I applied my mind to use indigenous material, and designed the bridge in the most cost effective way.

I handed over the design to the villagers and advised them to approach the local MLA and Jilla Panchayat Engineer for funds. At that point in time, the government did not have funds allocated for hanging bridges. Hence, the villagers returned disappointed. The villagers told me that they will collect money from every household and requested me to re-design the bridges so that it can carry 20 people at a time.

Seeing their plight, I offered to guide and construct the bridge for them without charging any fee. As the length was 87.00M, I designed it to carry 100 people at a time. In fact, when we design according to I.R.C specifications, the bridge should actually carry 400 people at a time.

I mobilized local materials, and took the help of my friend who was a civil engineer to advice on the size of the columns and reinforcement. We also engaged volunteers in the construction work with my guidance. In two and a half months, the bridge was ready!

It was a simple bridge and the villagers were very happy. We had over 1,000 people attending the inauguration. I took the first test walk across the bridge and was tensed. I took the risk on me, as I did not want any villager to be affected.

The villagers thanked me immensely and I was moved with their kindness. The happiness I saw in their eyes motivated me to work for more people like them.

Did you shift focus from mechanical engineering to civil engineering altogether?

I had to balance both – doing free service for the villagers and at the same time manage my workshop to earn my income.

At the time of inauguration of the 50th bridge, Villagers of Shishila released a book where I mentioned that this would be the last bridge that I have ever constructed. Sri. Harshendra Kumar was the Chief Guest of the inaugural event. He is the brother of Dr. Veerendra Hegde of Dharmasthala, whom we believe and respect as representative of God. He told me that and I should construct many more bridges to benefit the rural people. I was confused and did not know how to react.

On the same day, while returning home, I was listening to Anoop Jalotha’s bhajans in the car. I heard Tulsidas where he quotes the story of Lord Ram crossing the river along with Sita and Lakshman.

The story goes like this: Lord Ram offers the boatman Sita’s ring to repay him for his service. But, the boatman refuses to accept it stating that people of the same profession do not charge each other for their services. When Lord Ram asked the boatman how he could be considered to be of the same profession, the boatman replied saying - while he ferries people from this shore of the Ganges to the other, Lord Ram ferries people across the ocean of Samsaara (Bhavsagar), through the journey of life.

Listening to this recitation, I wept. I realized that God is sending me a message and asking me to build bridges for the villagers. It is a holy profession! God has given me the ability and I have a good team to work with. I remembered my friend saying: “If you mind, you can!” Hence, I decided to continue building bridges.

How do you ensure that the bridges are safe for people even after 10 years?

Well, what was designed to last for 10 years has now lasted for 28 years. We are now using Ferro Cement Slabs, instead of wooden planks. Now, all galvanized steel sections and ropes are also galvanized and checkered plates are used instead of Ferro Cement Slabs.

I inspect the bridge once in two years and carry out necessary repairs if required. Two-wheelers can be taken over the bridges.

My son has done structural engineering and worked in Australia and Mauritius. He was involved in designing marine structures, and has returned to India now. He takes care of my workshop and also assists me in designing bridges.

Are you happy with the recognition you have gained for your work? Is there a growing demand for bridges?

I have taken a liking to work with the rural communities. The affection they show towards me is overwhelming. Nothing gives more satisfaction than when people in villages thank my team for the connectivity created.

The government started recognizing my work and the District Chief Secretary (Now C.E.O) visited our village. He appreciated the rural connectivity that was provided in the most cost effective manner and in a very short span. Many government departments have started to approach me to construct similar bridges for other villages.

Tony of Switzerland who builds Suspension bridges in poor countries came to see my works and treat me like his “Bridge Brother”. This was a proud moment for me.

I am really happy at this recognition and I share these awards with my team members. Though I design these bridges, it is my team that undertakes the complete construction work.