

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

RNI No.TNENG/2013/52428 | Volume 13 | Issue 3 | March 2025 | 12 Pages | For Free Circulation Only | www.msdsrust.org



PUBLISHED BY: P.N.SUBRAMANIAN
on behalf of Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani,
391/1, Venkatachalapathi Nagar, Alapakkam,
Chennai - 600 116 and printed by him at
Express Press, Express Gardens, No.29,
Second Main Road, Ambattur Industrial Estate,
Chennai - 600 058. Phone : 044-42805365
EDITOR: MARIE BANU

6 COVER STORY

Roots of Identity About Solitude Farm in Auroville

Changemakers



3 Promoting Green Practices Through Organic Farming

Sasikala's efforts to ensure that future generations inherit not just fertile land but a thriving ecosystem

Profile



9 Eco-friendly Innovations with Jute Geotextiles

Dr. Pradip Choudhury's Legacy: Advancing Sustainable Engineering with Jut

Chit Chat



12 "Sustainability is not a destination, but a continuous journey."

An exclusive interview with Mr. Jacob Jose, Researcher, author, and Business Development Professional

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Family has always been the cornerstone of society, providing individuals with love, support, and a sense of belonging. Across cultures, family values are deeply embedded, emphasising care for elders, respect for traditions, and the nurturing of the younger generation. However, in today's fast-paced world, evolving lifestyles, urban migration, and economic demands have led to a shift in family dynamics, bringing forth critical discussions about the role of institutions like palliative care centers and old age homes. Are they a boon, offering dignity and comfort to the elderly, or a bane, symbolising the decline of familial bonds?

Traditionally, families were joint systems where multiple generations lived under one roof, fostering emotional and financial interdependence. However, the pressures of modern living—professional commitments, nuclear family structures, and migration—have created a gap in care-giving. As a result, many elderly individuals find themselves without adequate support at home, leading to the emergence of institutionalised care services.

Palliative care services provide specialised medical and emotional support to individuals suffering from chronic illnesses or nearing the end of life. These facilities ensure comfort, pain management, and emotional well-being, which might not always be feasible in home settings. While some argue that placing a loved one in palliative care signifies neglect, others see it as an act of compassion, ensuring professional attention and dignity in their final days. Instead of being viewed as an alternative to family care, palliative services should be seen as complementary, helping families navigate complex medical needs while maintaining emotional connection.

Old age homes have long been stigmatised as places where children 'abandon' their parents. This perception stems from the belief that filial duty demands personal caregiving. However, in many cases, these institutions serve as sanctuaries, offering companionship, medical care, and emotional support to elders who might otherwise face loneliness and neglect. The key concern is not their existence but the reasons compelling their need. If families actively participate in maintaining emotional bonds—through visits, communication, and financial support—old age homes can be a boon rather than a symbol of broken family ties.

The challenge lies in balancing modern constraints with traditional values. Families must adapt to changing social structures without losing their core responsibilities toward their elders. The presence of old age homes and palliative care centers should not be seen as failures of society but as extensions of familial love and responsibility in contemporary contexts. Instead of questioning their necessity, we should strive to integrate these services into a framework where dignity, love, and respect for the elderly continue to thrive within families.

Ultimately, the true measure of family values lies not in where our elders live but in how we ensure their happiness, health, and dignity in their twilight years.

Marie Banu

EDITORIAL

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu Rodriguez

THE RISE OF AI VOICE CLONING

Artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionised the way we interact with technology, and one of its most fascinating advancements is voice cloning. With just a few seconds of audio, AI can now replicate a person's voice with high accuracy. While this innovation holds immense potential, it also raises serious concerns about cybersecurity, especially in a digitally evolving country like India.

Voice cloning uses AI algorithms to analyse the unique characteristics of a person's speech—tone, pitch, rhythm, and even emotional inputs. Once the system processes these elements, it can generate a synthetic voice that sounds almost indistinguishable from the original. What's alarming is how accessible this technology has become. Some of these applications requiring just a few seconds of audio to create a convincing audio clone of person's voice.

Free or low-cost tools now allow even non-experts to create convincing voice clones, making it a double-edged sword.

The Dark Side of Voice Cloning

While voice cloning has legitimate uses, such as helping people with speech disabilities or creating personalised virtual assistants, but misusing technology requires a global concern. In India, where digital adoption happens like a skyrocketing, the risks are particularly high. Here are some real-world scenarios that could affect anyone:

The "Family Emergency" Scam: Imagine receiving a call from a panicked voice claiming to be a loved one in distress, urgently asking for money. In the heat of the moment, would you question the authenticity of their voice? Such scams are already happening. For instance, there have been reports of scammers replicating voices to trick parents into believing their child has been kidnapped, demanding ransom for their release.

Corporate Fraud: Businesses are at risk when attackers impersonate executives to authorise fraudulent transactions. A notable case involved criminals using AI to mimic a CEO's voice, instructing a subordinate to transfer a substantial sum of money to a fraudulent account.

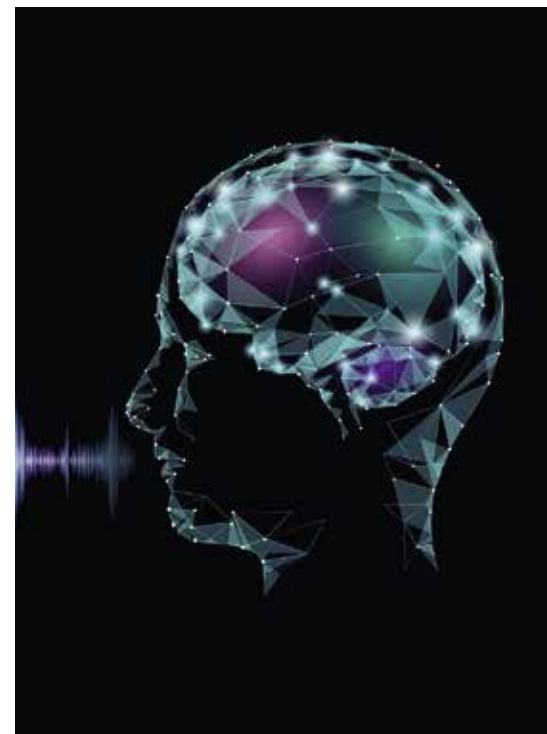
Voice Phishing (Vishing): Cybercriminals are using voice cloning in phishing crimes, convincing individuals to share personal data over the phone. For instance, a scammer might call pretending to be a bank representative, using a cloned voice to ask for sensitive information like OTPs or account details. The authenticity of the voice makes these scams hard to detect.

You can raise a question Why India is Vulnerable to these scams. Several factors make India a prime target for voice cloning scams:

Social Media Overload: Indians are one among the most active social media users globally. From Instagram reels to WhatsApp voice notes, we're constantly sharing audio and video content. This in turn, providing scammers with ample source material to clone voices.

Digital Naivety: At present India, many of us are unaware or lack in digital literacy. India is digitizing rapidly, many users are still unaware of the sophistication of cyber threats, making them easy targets.

Decision Fatigue: In a fast-paced, hyper-connected world, we're bombarded with



information and decisions daily. When a crisis call comes in, our ability to think critically is often compromised, making us more susceptible to scams.

As voice cloning technology becomes more advanced, it's crucial to stay proactive and vigilant. Here are some practical steps to safeguard against voice cloning scams:

Establish Verification Protocols: Families and organisations should have code words or phrases to confirm identities during phone calls. A simple question like "What's our pet's name?" can help verify if the caller is genuine.

Limit Sharing Personal Audio: Be cautious about posting audio or video content online. Adjust privacy settings to restrict access to trusted contacts only.

Educate and Empower: Schools, colleges, and workplaces should conduct regular workshops on digital literacy and cybersecurity. Awareness is the first line of self-defence.

Use Multifactor Authentication (MFA): Enable MFA for sensitive accounts. Even if a scammer has your cloned voice, they won't be able to bypass additional security layers like OTPs or biometric verification.

As AI continues to evolve, so will the tactics of cybercriminals. It's crucial for individuals, businesses, and policymakers to work together to combat this threat. Government also in need to consider regulations around the use of voice cloning technology, while tech companies has to support in developing tools to detect and prevent its misuse.

Voice cloning is a reminder that every technological leap comes with its own set of challenges. For India, this is an opportunity to lead the way in cybersecurity education and innovation. By staying informed and cautious, we can harness the benefits of AI while protecting ourselves from its dark side. In the age of voice cloning, a little skepticism can go a long way.

Stay alert, stay safe, and let's ensure we're not just early adopters of technology, but also smart users.

Arulselvi Azhagiri

PROMOTING GREEN PRACTICES THROUGH ORGANIC FARMING

In a world increasingly dominated by commercial farming and chemical-based agriculture, Sasikala stands as a beacon of sustainability, rooted deeply in organic farming traditions. Coming from a family of dedicated organic farmers, her story is one of passion, resilience, and a deep respect for nature.

Sasikala's journey into organic farming was not a mere career choice but a continuation of a family legacy. "I grew up watching my parents and grandparents work closely with nature," she shares. "For us, farming is not just about growing crops; it is about nurturing the land that sustains us."

Unlike many who switch to organic farming later in life, Sasikala never had to unlearn chemical-based farming methods. Her family has adhered to traditional, natural practices for generations. "We never saw the need for artificial fertilizers or pesticides. The land gives back when you treat it with care and patience," she says with conviction.

While organic farming is often romanticized, Sasikala is candid about the struggles involved. "It takes time for the soil to adjust, and yields might be lower initially. But in the long run, it pays off—not just in terms of produce but also in the health of the land and those who consume the food." She highlights the financial and physical challenges, particularly in the face of unpredictable weather patterns.

"Sometimes, organic farmers are at a disadvantage because our methods take longer. But I believe that quality should always come before quantity," she asserts. She stresses the importance of patience and consistency, explaining how natural composting, crop rotation, and biodiversity in farming have kept her soil fertile over the years.

To tackle these challenges, Sasikala and her family employ sustainable techniques like companion planting, where certain crops are grown together to deter pests naturally. She also uses cow dung and compost as organic fertilizers to enrich the soil. "Nature has all the answers; we just need to observe and understand how to work with it rather than against it."

Sasikala believes in the power of collective knowledge. "Farming is not an isolated activity. It's a community effort," she says. She actively participates in farmer networks where traditional wisdom is exchanged, and new techniques are discussed.

One of the strongest pillars of support in Sasikala's journey has been her mentor, Kumari, a well-respected figure in the local farming community. Kumari has guided Sasikala through challenges, offering wisdom drawn from years of experience in organic farming. "Kumari has been there for me every step of the way. Whenever I face difficulties, she is the first



person I turn to," Sasikala shares.

Kumari is known for her expertise in sustainable agriculture and has built a name in the region for her pioneering work. Her mentorship has played a crucial role in shaping Sasikala's approach to farming. "She taught me that organic farming is not just about avoiding chemicals; it is about understanding the land, respecting it, and working with nature," Sasikala adds.

One of her key initiatives is educating younger farmers about organic methods. "Many young people are hesitant to take up farming because they think it's not profitable. But when they see the long-

term benefits, some of them reconsider." She conducts small workshops and shares her experiences, proving that organic farming can be both sustainable and rewarding.

Beyond producing healthy food, Sasikala emphasizes the environmental impact of organic farming. "We are not just growing crops; we are preserving biodiversity, conserving water, and reducing carbon footprints." She talks about how organic farming helps restore soil health, prevents water contamination, and promotes a balanced ecosystem.

"When I see birds, bees, and earthworms thriving in my fields, I know I am doing something right," she says. For her, success is not measured in profits alone but in the harmony between humans and nature.

Sasikala emphasizes the crucial link between organic farming, human health, and environmental sustainability. She warns against the overuse of chemical pesticides, which not only degrade soil health but also pose significant health risks to consumers. "The food we eat should nourish us, not harm us. Organic produce is free from harmful chemicals, making it

safer and more nutritious."

Sasikala has a simple yet powerful message for those considering organic farming: "Start small, but start now. The soil needs time to heal, and so do we. Organic farming is not just about food—it's about a way of life." She encourages farmers to stay committed despite the challenges and to seek support from communities that share the same vision.

Her journey is a testament to the power of persistence, tradition, and respect for nature. As the demand for organic produce grows, farmers like Sasikala remind us of the importance of sustainable practices, ensuring that future generations inherit not just fertile land but a thriving ecosystem.

In an era where commercial agriculture and chemical farming practices prevail, Sasikala emerges as a symbol of sustainability, deeply entrenched in the principles of organic farming. Hailing from a lineage of committed organic farmers, her narrative is characterized by passion, resilience, and profound reverence for the environment.

Bhavadharani K

VITAL WELLNESS: WORK AND WELLNESS

[The Story So Far: We have been looking at wellness and illness from various perspectives over the past few months. In this edition of Vital Wellness, we'll be taking a closer look at our work, and how it impacts wellness.]

The work that we do occupies a great many hours of our days and our lives. Being able to do it willingly and happily contributes a great deal to our wellbeing. And the converse is also true - doing it with reluctance or with dislike or even indifference, taints so many hours of our lives, that it necessarily becomes a deterrent to our wellbeing. Therefore it stands to reason that if we all do the kind of work that makes us happy, then this would contribute greatly to our own wellbeing.

But how do we find out what work it is that makes us happy? The answer to this question is not as simple to arrive at as one would think! When I asked many adults the question 'what would you be like to be doing right now that will make you happy?', I got answers such as 'I want to go to sleep', 'I want to go on a holiday', 'I want to be free of stress and pressure so that I am happy', 'I want more money'. You'll notice that none of these answers, or variations of these, will give us any useful insights about the professions these people would like to be in. But when I asked many children less than 15 years of age the same question ('what would you be like to be doing right now that will make you happy?'), I got more illuminating answers. Some of them are 'I want to go home and play my drums', 'I want to stay here (in school) for some more time and chat with my friends', 'I want to play football', 'I want to make vanilla cookies for the bake sale but my mom isn't letting me', 'I want to play chess'. Each of these answers can be mapped to a profession without too much of a stretch of the imagination - we do have musicians and footballers and bakers and PR personnel in society.

Over the last 25+ years, I must have taught at the very least a thousand children different skills, spanning academic skills, musical skills, yoga, language proficiency skills, etc. I have always found that every child has a few go-to activities that they prefer to do when they have the leisure.

(I'm talking about real leisure here, not a resting period after intense studying for an exam or a gap in a series of hectic activities. In these periods of time, children will either sleep, if they are tired enough, or resort to some mind-numbing, stalling activity such as watching mindless TV or doing some other default activity just so that they can be spared the effort of choosing what to do. By leisure, I mean a time when they are perfectly fit and fine, not tired out with something, not forced to chase any deadline, and then get to choose how to spend their time, without any prior engagement or appointment with anybody else. A time when they can be by themselves entirely, and choose an activity that they themselves really, truly prefer to do, without any suggesting or instruction from the external world.)



These activities are invariably different for each child, and with a little effort and intelligence and imagination, we can see the seed of some profession or the other in each of them. Wouldn't it be wonderful if each child grew up to be an adult whose professional work overlaps with their preferred area of interest? They would then be spending a large chunk of their adult lives doing exactly what they like to do, and that in itself would give them a solid foundation in wellbeing.

I know this is not a new idea, and many books and movies have recently dwelt on the idea of not forcing youngsters into professions they do not prefer. But what I'm trying to highlight here is that many youngsters themselves may not know what it is that they like to do. One of the reasons could be that they don't have the leisure to choose what to do, and so they genuinely do not know what makes them happy. This issue needs parents' intervention to fix. In a world that mistakes being busy for being productive, it takes a lot of courage on the parents' part to protect their children's leisure, and not be drawn into the popular culture of cramming the children's calendars with as many directed/taught/supervised activities as possible. Once children have the leisure to know themselves, its very probable that what they do choose to do, does have the seed of some future profession in it. The best part is that if they were engaged most of the time in doing something they enjoy, then there would be no need to ever nag them and remind them to do it - a win-win all around.

In recent time, the concept of 'Ikigai' - the Japanese word for 'a purpose in life' or 'a reason to be' has come into prominence. The 'ikigai' diagram is a very meaningful one, and one of the aspects it talks about is what kind of profession brings a person happiness and wellbeing. Among other ideas, it conveys that if you choose your profession to be something that you are good at, and for which you will get paid, then it would contribute positively to your life and wellbeing. The point

to ponder here is whether anyone can get very good at doing something, if they do not like doing it in the first place - this seems extremely unlikely, as repeated practice is what makes a skill highly refined, and it would be unlikely for us to seek out and get repeated practice at doing something we do not really like doing. . . . I hope having considered the importance of leisure for youngsters through this article will strengthen your resolve to protect the leisure of all the youngsters in your family all through the coming summer!

Ramashree Paranandi



The author Ramashree Paranandi is a teacher, and a partner in The Organic Farm, Nedumaram, TN. She consults on applications of yoga, natural therapies and music for good health, and often stays over at the farm to recharge herself with pollution-free days spent amidst natural surroundings. An MA in Yogashastra enables her to apply the knowledge of the ancient texts to contemporary situations.



Centre for Social Initiative and Management

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

CSIM offers training and consultancy to social enterprises - for-profits and non-profits to facilitate them to apply successful business practices and yet retain their social mission. It also offers training and hand holding support to prospective social entrepreneurs and enable them to launch their social initiatives. www.csim.in

Contact Persons:

Ms. Marie Banu Rodrigues
Director, Chennai
@ 9884700029

Dr. Madhuri. R
Head, Coimbatore,
@ 91-9840222559

Dr. Agyeya Tripathi
Head - North & NE India
@ 91-8058662444

Mr. Sandeep Mehto,
Head - Hosangabad,
@ 91-96696 77054

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

For further information, please contact: Ms. Latha Suresh
Director, SAN, India
@ 92822 05123.
www.san-india.org

Battling for the Soil

Warriors for nature and its resources can come from the most unexpected places. For Arjun Gopalratnam, who had served the army for almost 16 years, the call to serve found a new meaning after his premature retirement at the age of 33, in 1986. “The army had taught me resilience, focus and strategy - qualities that were just as vital in the fields as they were on the battlefield,” he laughs.

He was born in Thanjavur in 1954 and followed his father to join the army at the age of 16 years. His early retirement was a shock to his family and friends, but Arjun wanted to realise his childhood dream of running a farm. “Love for nature and its abundance has always been there. I just did not find the right channels to realise them,” he adds. He took up different freelance work opportunities till 1992. He drove a van to transport children to school and picnics, organised scouting camps and sanctuary visits for school children, and also marketed documentary films made by his friends.

Arjun then joined the Garden Department of the Theosophical Society and served here for four years. The break in 1996 was spent with a friend in Mahabalipuram and it is here that he got to experience gardening as a very personal, enriching experience. “There’s something deeply personal about working the land. It’s not just about planting seeds and waiting for crops to grow—it’s about the connection you form with the earth beneath your feet. It’s a humbling experience to see something you nurtured from the ground up—something you planted with your own hands—grow and flourish. It’s more than just gardening; it’s a lesson in resilience, in patience and in the quiet power of growth,” he contemplates.

In 2004, he finally identified a land (8 acres) in Nerkundram village (Anampakkam Panchayat, Uthamerur Taluk, Kanchipuram District) that was located within the proximity of a reserve forest in this region. He had no prior experience or background in agriculture but knew that organic farming is good and just got started. “Books not only triggered my love for nature, but also encouraged me to liberally dream of what I could do in my farm. It was new energy every day. Farming, as a full time activity, just got on to me,” reflects Arjun. He recalls that farming in the early 2000s was a full-fledged activity that kept us engaged through the day in different activities. There were cattle, bullock carts, labourers available at the drop of hat and loads of simple interactions with people in the farm, which shaped decisions about activities on the following day. “It was all so simple and meaningful,” he adds.

Cut to today, he sees deep contrast in the way farming is perceived and carried out. Cattle engagement on the field has declined, shepherding has reduced. The



village where houses were predominantly made of palm leaves had now given way for concrete structures. There are better roads than before, no more bullock carts, surge in alcohol consumption in all parts of the state and above all, labour costs have increased by over twenty times. “This is generally seen as growth but how did we grow, I fail to understand. Futuristic jobs are not connected to nature. Our children are moving farther from nature,” he laments.

The northern side of the farm is bordered by the expansive Edamichi lake, stretching across 211 hectares of land. This river serves as the lifeblood of the region's ecosystem and biodiversity. Grazing, fishing, duck farming and various agricultural activities are common sights along its banks. The lake irrigates five villages on the east side and five more on the west side of Edamichi hill, replenishing ponds, wells and groundwater essential for farming and sustaining the local communities.

Arjun, who was smitten by the place's beauty and occupied with his farm activities, was shocked to learn that the government had issued permission for a quarry, 100 meters from the lake. “A

volley of questions in mind and the fear of losing all that these surrounding lands behold shook me. How callous can such decisions be? I wanted to raise my voice against this,” he recalls those days of shock and disbelief. He and his team were busy managing farm supplies to their clients, but now, their focus was to save the region's ecosystem. Arjun immediately engaged few friends and lawyers to work on obtaining a stay order on this permission. A case was filed in the National Green Tribunal and subsequently got the verdict in their favour. However, in January 2025, the same site had been cleared once again for a quarry. “We had to act immediately before it was too late. We carried out a geological survey in the nearby villages, documented all the water bodies, aquifers and the cultivation. We have studied the impact this quarry could have on the levels of ground water, soil and air pollution, grazing, livelihood of fishermen and region's ecology. This forty page report is our first line of defence against the administration's irresponsible decision, backed by a false claim that no agriculture thrives in the region's 1 kilometer radius,” he explains.

He has been managing all of this while continuing to farm full-time on his land. As machinery became increasingly essential in farming, he designed a weeder for vegetables and peanuts. A drum separator for peanuts was developed in consultation with his farm. With support from institutions like IIT and Nirman Volunteer Group from IIM,

his farm demonstrated that farming can thrive with affordable machinery. His farm also inspired the creation of a battery-operated transplanter and benefited from a professor's invention of solar dryers. “It is very good for all the dry products we make – all kind of fryums from different vegetables. However, the challenge is in marketing as I live in my farm which is 80 kilometers from the nearest city. We do not get premium from local markets for any of our products, unfortunately. I have had bad days too – there was also a time when I had to sell brinjal from my farm for a meagre three rupees per kilogram,” he points out.

More than two decades of his life have been dedicated to this land and its ecosystem. What was once a simple, classic farm without trees has now transformed into a thriving ecosystem with a canopy of at least 15 different species – with mango, banana orchards, cattle sheds, store room for drying produce, shed for jaggery making from sugarcane, timber storage and a campsite; but all of this is now at risk due to a quarrying decision. Arjun is determined to stay this order and protect the region's ecology. “We all live together and share space with monkeys, peacocks, hare, mongoose, deer, reptiles, porcupine, pigs, etc and a variety of birds. Environmental protection is all about letting it be, rather than planting new trees in compensation,” he remarks.

Shanmuga Priya.T

ROOTS OF IDENTITY

A JOURNEY THROUGH AUROVILLE'S CULTURAL REDEMPTION



In the heart of Auroville, a place where non-ending exploration and experimentation are not just encouraged, but imprinted in the very DNA of its existence, there was Krishna McKenzie who had embarked on a journey, unlike any other. He wasn't just farming; he was reclaiming a cultural identity long forgotten by the world.

When he was given the land to cultivate, there was no one dictating the terms of his labour. No quotas to fill, no demands for specific crops. He had the freedom to explore, to experiment, and to create something new—a farm not just for food, but a sacred space that embodied the philosophy

of Auroville: spiritual, practical, and deeply rooted in the connection between humans and nature. For the first decade, it was like the carefree days of childhood—almost wasteful, yet full of discovery and growth.

But after thirty years, what began as an innocent experiment in the fertile land of Auroville had transformed. His farm became renowned worldwide, featured on television every week. People from around the globe were drawn to the innovative approach to food, health, and culture. The world had noticed, and it was all thanks to the intention of the Mother, who had set Auroville on a path of spiritual and practical

exploration.

Krishna found a way to bridge the ancient with the modern. The food that grew on his land was more than sustenance; it was a vehicle of cultural redemption, a reclamation of forgotten knowledge, and a deep return to the earth. He often spoke of the concept of the Annamaya Kosha—the body sheath—first introduced in the Upanishads. He would tell anyone who listened that the body, mind, and energy were intricately tied together, and food was the thread that wove them all.

"Where does your food come from?" he would ask, speaking not only to his visitors but to

anyone willing to listen. "Do you know where the rice in your dosa was grown? Or the wheat in your roti? No? That disconnect, that loss of understanding, is what's making us lose touch with our culture. Our food is our identity. Without knowing where it comes from, we cannot know ourselves."

"In the world today, food had become an abstract commodity. People were no longer aware of the hands that sowed the seeds or the soil that nourished them. The global market had turned food into a product that could be shipped across the world, with no regard for the land, the climate, or the people. In England, for example, there was

no collective food culture—only beer and football," says Krishna with a slight chuckle. It was a fragmented society, disconnected from its roots. "In India, we still have a chance. We have the knowledge, the wisdom to restore what was lost. But we must act now," he adds.

He spoke of his farm not as a place for organic farming, but as a living example of cultural redemption. The term "organic" had become a marketing tool, a modern invention to sell an idea that once existed naturally. His farm was not merely a place where crops were grown; it was a food forest—a reflection of the wild, untamed jungles where nature thrived in harmony. There were trees of all sizes, creepers climbing up tall trunks, shrubs with medicinal leaves, and a variety of plants that worked together as an ecosystem, just like nature intended.

"Food is medicine. Look at this tree—Murunga. It's everywhere in Tamil Nadu. You break off a stick, stick it in the soil, and it grows. No need for expertise, no need for fancy fertilizers. And that's not all. Every part of this tree, every leaf, is a gift from Mother Nature. You won't find this in industrialised farming," says Krishna.

And that was the beauty of it all—Krishna's food was medicine. The farm was a pharmacy, a living testament to the power of local, indigenous plants. He spoke of Guduchi, the nectar of immortality, and Lakshmanphal, a fruit that was said to be ten thousand times more effective in treating cancer than chemotherapy. His farm was a treasure trove of remedies, all grown with the same love and reverence that the land had given to those who knew how to listen.

In the modern world, food had become an economic transaction. People grew crops for profit, but Krishna's approach was different. He understood that nutrition was the true wealth. In his farm, there were no monocultures, no crops grown for their market value. There was diversity, and that diversity was what fed the soul. He had long since discarded the idea of industrial farming, which was driven by the need for profit and the reduction of food to a mere product.

"If we continue down this road, we lose everything. We forget the foods that nourished our ancestors. We forget the foods that healed us. It's not about making money—it's about honouring the earth, honouring the soil, and in doing so, honoring ourselves," he says.

In his mind, the true solution lay in honouring local foods, creating a farm-to-plate movement that would connect people with the land. He dreamt of a future where children ate meals made from food grown in their own villages—where the Lakshmanphal, the Moringa, and the humble banana stem were not just forgotten relics of a past era but were once again valued as integral parts of their cultural and nutritional heritage. Krishna knew that the true answer to the world's most pressing issues—climate change, health crises, and disconnection—was in the food. If people could learn to honour the local food around them, if they could understand the deep connection between their food and their culture, then they would also begin to heal the world. The solution was right beneath their feet, growing abundantly in the soil, waiting to be embraced once more.

As I stood on his farm, I felt a deep sense of peace. This was Krishna's offering to the world—a simple, yet profound message: "Honor the earth, and she will feed you. Honor the food, and you will find your way back home."

Marie Banu Rodriguez



Helps Hearing Impaired Kids Fulfil their Dreams



Early Intervention Levels the Playing Field for Children with Hearing Loss

Having worked as a paediatric audiologist for 17 years, I've journeyed with numerous parents and their children with hearing loss. Invariably, it's been proven that time is critical when it comes to detecting and diagnosing the condition, as the consequences are significant. Delayed treatment and rehabilitation may negatively impact a child's speech, language and psycho-social development, resulting in slower learning and missed opportunities later in life.

This is why early intervention programmes, such as the one Cochlea Pune runs, are crucial. In the same vein, the introduction of Singapore's Universal Newborn Hearing Screening in the early 2000s enabled all local babies to be screened at birth for hearing loss. Singapore also trains and equips qualified audiologists under its Masters of Science Audiology programme, to effectively diagnose and treat congenital hearing loss — the more severe form of which affects one in 1,000 infants.

I've witnessed the transformative power of those efforts in my patients. These include a four-year-old suspected to have autism, due to speech and social developmental delays. His parents endured

emotional challenges supporting their son, who displayed behavioural and communication problems. This even imperilled their marriage, with both parents at their wits' end trying to figure out how to help their child.

Thankfully, we discovered that the child's issues stemmed from undetected hearing loss, and speedily treated him with cochlear implants and intensive aural habilitation. As a result of this timely intervention to restore his hearing, his behaviour normalised and he was able to pick up speech naturally. Today, the child is thriving academically and socially in a mainstream secondary school, and his family is living harmoniously.

This case particularly struck a chord with me, as it underscores the positive impact of early intervention on both children and their families. We can't discount the fact that caregivers of children with hearing loss endure a significant amount of stress. Their emotional and mental well-being should therefore not be overlooked.

On that note, I find it remarkable how Cochlea Pune involves caregivers in their children's treatment journeys, going as far as to house them in the same

accommodation. The programme's unique structure could enable caregivers to lend one another moral support, so that they can — in turn — better care for their children.

Such holistic support for children with hearing loss is emphasised in Singapore, which provides subsidies for cochlear implants and assistive technologies. There are also selected preschools that render additional support including audiologists, speech-language therapists and even dedicated signing teachers to deliver the curriculum alongside the main teacher. This allows preschoolers with hearing loss to benefit from early education, like any other child.

The aforementioned initiatives are aligned with Singapore's push for greater inclusivity for persons with disabilities. Our Enabling Masterplan 2030 maps out strategies to better support persons with disabilities and enable them to contribute to society. These include incentives and alternative employment models to promote self-sufficiency, improved public infrastructure to help them integrate with society and greater inclusivity in schools to empower them to reach their full potential.

With that being said, there's still a level of social stigma associated with hearing

loss. In my practice, I've encountered multiple parents who are unable to accept their child's condition due to a sense of shame. Mothers in particular, tend to bear the guilt of their child being born with hearing loss and often blame themselves for something they did or did not do during pregnancy.

However, with the increase in societal awareness and advancement in hearing technology, a growing number of parents now realise that congenital hearing loss isn't a dead end, but rather an obstacle to overcome. Deaf children can achieve just as much as their hearing peers and be successful persons who contribute to society, through timely intervention and support from all quarters.

As Helen Keller once said, "Blindness separates people from things, deafness separates people from people." Let's create a better world that gives hope, respect and equal opportunities for everyone.

A story by Our Better World – the digital storytelling initiative of the Singapore International Foundation

ECO-FRIENDLY INNOVATIONS WITH JUTE GEOTEXTILES

Fifty years ago, the educational landscape in India was not as diverse as it is today. There were fewer professional courses, and most students pursued general degrees, especially in the sciences, which were considered a foundation for various career paths. Graduating in science was often seen as a step towards becoming a teacher, researcher, or entering government services, which were highly respected and offered job security.

“I thought so too, when I graduated in Science in 1971. But then, the nascent industrial growth demanded scientific and technical expertise to help develop infrastructure, defence, agriculture and industry. I chose to explore the potential of natural materials, so completed my post-graduation in Jute Technology from the University of Calcutta in 1974,” shares Dr Pradip Choudhury, retired Scientist of Indian Jute Industries Research Association and retired Technical Advisor, National Jute Board under the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. He is a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers and member of many professional bodies like, BIS, IRC etc.

In a career spanning almost five decades, Pradip has dedicated all his efforts, in all capacities, to prove the potential of jute as an incredible natural fiber. “Jute is a highly flexible and useful natural fiber that has many different uses. Known as the ‘golden fiber’, it is strong, durable and environmentally friendly. Jute is commonly found in products like

bags, sacks and even carpets or furniture covers. It is also used in construction for making eco-friendly materials and in farming to help control soil erosion. Jute is an excellent alternative to plastic and other synthetic materials in various civil engineering applications, as it can be woven into site-specific fabric and naturally decomposes. With more focus on protecting the environment, jute is becoming even more popular as a sustainable material that can be used in a wide variety of ways,” he explains.

Having obtained training from institutions in USA & Germany, Pradip wanted to study Jute’s versatility and develop products for different pressing needs. One such critical application in the road construction sector was explored during his reign as the Principal Scientist at the Jute Research Institute in Calcutta. If load bearing capacity of soil in the locations chosen to build roads happens to be weak, the soil is strengthened by using jute fabric that he designed and developed. This makes the roads long lasting as jute enables quicker soil consolidation. His visit to Netherlands in 1976 got him to explore jute’s capacity in protecting river bank erosion and slope stabilisation.

“When jute mats or geotextiles are placed on the surface of a slope, they create a protective layer that prevents the topsoil from being washed away by rain or wind due to run-off. Over time, the jute material biodegrades, but prior to its decomposition process, it helps the vegetation to grow, whose roots further stabilize the slope through bio-engineering technique. As the jute slowly decomposes, it adds organic matter to the soil, enhancing soil fertility and providing a better environment for vegetation,” elaborates Pradip. His leadership led to successful field applications, drawing the government’s attention to promote this material nationally and globally.

In their innovative approach to slope stabilization, Pradip and team combined

the natural benefits of jute geotextiles (JGT) with the powerful soil-holding properties of Vetiver grass. This bio-engineering method was tested at the NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation) dump yard in Uttar Pradesh and many other places. The team constructed a protective barrier wall around the perimeter of the dump yard using jute fabric, a biodegradable material known for its hygroscopic (moisture-absorbing) and hydrophilic (water-attracting) properties. These characteristics helped create a favourable environment for plant growth. Once the jute fabric was in place, Vetiver grass, known for its dense, fibrous roots that can grow up to 3 meters deep, was planted in the gaps within the fabric. Vetiver’s deep and strong root system makes it highly effective in stabilizing soil, especially on slopes, by anchoring the soil and preventing erosion. The combination of jute’s moisture retention and Vetiver’s robust root system provided a highly effective and sustainable solution for soil stabilization. This approach not only enhanced the stability of the dump yard but also offered an eco-friendly and natural method of reinforcing the soil.

“Jute also helps in mitigating climate change. A jute plantation on one hectare of land can absorb up to 15 metric tons of carbon dioxide and release 12 metric tons of oxygen into the air,” he informs.

Pradip’s contributions were acknowledged by various institutions, and the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) invited him to Leh and Ladakh to assess and benefit from the potential of jute geotextiles in stabilizing extreme temperatures and fostering vegetation in these challenging conditions. “Jute helps stabilize soil by insulating against harsh temperature fluctuations. The moisture-retaining properties of jute support plant growth, promoting vegetation in otherwise arid conditions. Jute also prevents soil erosion on steep slopes, enhancing soil stability. As an eco-

friendly material, jute geotextiles provide sustainable solutions for this fragile, high-altitude region,” he adds.

Pradip also developed detailed guidelines for the use of geotextiles in all the applications discussed above. His standard guidelines were recognized and officially published by the Bureau of Indian Standards. Additionally, he also created the IRC Code for road construction and also RD&SO guidelines for Indian Railways and comprehensive guidelines for the use of geotextiles in all the 17 divisions of Indian Railways – all of which were accepted and published. Over 1,000 field applications were carried out under his direct technical guidance. Indian Journal of Soil Conservation awarded him the Best Research Paper on Jute Geotextiles in 2021. He was also awarded the Best Paper Presentation at international conferences in Japan (2007) and IIT Hyderabad (2024).

Over 300 roads across India have been constructed using jute geotextiles, and more than 500 slope protection projects have been successfully completed. JGT has also been used successfully in river bank erosion control, rain water harvesting tanks, agro-mulching, jute sleeves for growth of saplings etc. “Despite all the research and extensive field applications, jute holds only a 2% share of the market, while synthetic geotextiles continue to dominate. There is a need for more aggressive marketing to promote jute,” he emphasises. After his retirement in 2022, Pradip is a visiting faculty in many Engineering Colleges to educate the budding civil engineers about the potency of natural JGT. Even today he extends technical support and guidance to the manufactures and end users of JGT energetically. “It is now for them to exploit the applications built so far using the most cost effective natural fiber,” he smiles.

Shanmuga Priya.T



A BOLD LEAP TOWARD ECO-FRIENDLY LIVING

It all started with a dream—an idea that seemed simple at first but soon became a journey of bold decisions and deep-rooted connections with nature. I wanted to build a treehouse. Not just any treehouse, but one that blended seamlessly with the natural world. And I had just the place in mind—Ellaiamman Koil Village on ECR, where my brother-in-law owned a one-acre plot.

Planting the Seeds of a Dream

Over the years, I had nurtured this land with a deep love for trees. I planted Mila Dubia, Teak, Vengai, Red Sanders, and Rosewood, while Neem trees flourished on their own. A small Miyawaki forest took shape, standing as a dense green sanctuary alongside a five-layer zero-base natural farm, inspired by Subash Palekar.

The land held its own history—50-year-old trees bore silent witness to time. A single grand mango tree, three jackfruit trees, thirteen swaying coconut palms, and three towering teak trees stood strong when the land was bought. Wanting to add my own legacy, I planted three more mango trees, two guava trees, and three amla trees, each promising fruits for future generations.

From Treehouse to Wooden Haven

With excitement, I began a feasibility study for the treehouse, only to find an unexpected challenge—the trees were spaced too far apart. Undeterred, I let the idea evolve. If a treehouse wasn't possible, why not an elevated wooden house? One that still nestled within nature but had a firm foundation.

I envisioned a wooden house standing 8 feet above the ground, surrounded by jackfruit, mango, and coconut trees that had stood for over half a century. Below, an open space for cooking and dining would transform the land into a place of warmth and shared meals.

The design took shape—a 300 sq. ft. elevated haven with an attached bathroom, a wrap-around balcony, and a unique surprise: one end of the balcony would be lovingly embraced by jackfruit trees, their broad leaves brushing against the wooden railings.

Bringing the Vision to Life

With a clear plan, we set to work: **Foundation & Support:** Eight solid palm tree trunks, each over 100 years old, were grouted deep into the soil to hold the house firm. Around them, sturdy wooden posts made from repurposed Kongu and Vengai timber were secured with fasteners.

Floors & Walls: Instead of using fresh timber, we repurposed old doors—30 in total—crafted from teak and marudu, breathing new life into materials once forgotten. The walls were built from coconut trunk planks, fastened tightly together.

Doors & Windows: Rescued from an old lumber shop, the doors and windows carried a vintage charm. The grill windows were fitted with old glass sheets, diffusing light into soft, golden hues.

A Roof of Nature: The roofing was crafted from coconut materials, ensuring



the house remained cool even in the summer heat.

A Cozy Interior: Inside, the walls were first covered with simple mats, later replaced with elegant bamboo mats. To protect against termites, every wooden surface was coated with cashew kernel oil, a natural and sustainable solution.

Reaching New Heights: The steps leading up to the house were carefully carved from old wooden pieces, each one telling its own silent story.

Water & Sustainability: A reused 200-liter drum was buried underground to collect Panchayat water, which was then pumped to an elevated drum mounted on old wooden logs, standing 20 feet high. This ensured a steady water supply for the bathroom.

Dining Under the Mango Tree

Beyond just a home, I wanted to create a gathering space. Under the grand old mango tree, long wooden tables were set up. Here, meals could be served, laughter could be shared, and stories could flow as freely as the gentle breeze. A separate cooking area was established with storage shelves, a high table for meal

preparations, and an open-air dining experience that allowed one to truly savor the simplicity of nature.

A Labor of Love

Transporting nearly three tons of reused wood from Mahabalipuram, 40 kilometers away, was no small feat. But it was worth it. Local skilled workers lent their expertise, their hands shaping a dream into reality.

A Home Rooted in Nature

Standing on the balcony, feeling the whisper of jackfruit leaves against my skin, I knew this was more than just a house. It was a statement—a declaration that we can build without destroying, that we can reuse instead of waste, and that we can live in harmony with nature rather than against it.

The journey from a treehouse dream to an elevated wooden home had been unexpected, but sometimes, the best paths are the ones we never planned to take. And in the heart of Ellaiamman Koil Village, amidst the towering trees and the songs of birds, I had found my own little piece of paradise.

—P.N.Subramanian

MSDS 2025 AGRIPRENEUR AWARDS

Manava Seva Dharma Samvardhani (MSDS) hosted its 25th Annual Awards Ceremony on March 1, 2025, at St. Ann's School, Tindivanam. The event honored agripreneurs and farmers engaged in natural farming and Vetiver cultivation, recognizing their contributions to sustainable agriculture.

Seven awardees across five categories were felicitated with a silver plaque, citation, and shawl. The awards were instituted in memory of Late Karmayogi P.N. Devarajan, Founder of MSDS Trust, and Late Swami Nityanandagiri of Thapovanam, the Chief Patron of the Trust. Additionally, three outstanding farmers practicing organic and natural farming were awarded the Sadguru Gnanananda Fellowships.

Each fellow will receive Rs. 7,500 per month for a year, with the fellowship extending up to three years, subject to annual reviews. They will also receive mentorship from experts to scale their operations and train fellow farmers. Each fellow was honored with a silver plaque, citation, and shawl in recognition of their dedication.

The event was graced by Shri L. Narayana Moorthi, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Polur, Tiruvannamalai District, as the Chief Guest. Mr. P. N. Subramaniam, Managing Trustee of MSDS, delivered an inspiring address to the 300+ attendees, which included farmers and their families. Swamini Prabhavananda Saraswathi of Gnanananda Niketan, Thapovanam, the Chief Patron of the Trust, sent an audio message blessing the occasion.

A key highlight of the event was the launch of the book "Unsung Beacons - Vol. 15," which chronicles the inspiring stories of social change agents and farmers. The foreword was written by Smt. Santha Sheela Nair, former IAS officer, who attended as a special guest.

MSDS also introduced a soil testing initiative, enabling farmers to assess soil fertility at a nominal cost of Rs.

100, helping them make informed decisions about land management.

The event also shed light on emerging opportunities in organic farming and agribusiness. Aviral Pathak, a dedicated organic farmer, has been making strides in the production of essential oils, particularly Vetiver oil, which is gaining popularity due to its diverse applications and growing market potential.

Similarly, the cashew fruit remains an underutilized resource, despite estimates suggesting availability between 100 to 1,000+ tons. Shiva Pvt. Ltd. is exploring ways to unlock its economic potential, as last year's harvest was fully sold, indicating a significant market opportunity.

Govindarajan, a traditional food expert, emphasized the importance of consuming wholesome, natural foods for better health. He reinforced the philosophy that "Food is medicine, and medicine is food." He stated, "We are what we eat. Every disease stems from our diet, and hunger itself is the first ailment."

Shivarani, a leader in a Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), highlighted the importance of community recognition and the power of collective farming efforts. The discussion further stressed the economic advantages of working as a community, with financial sustainability being a key focus.

Arun Kumar, a former Fellow, shared how the fellowship program played a pivotal role in his growth. "Without this fellowship, I wouldn't have reached where I am today," he reflected. His contributions to organic food and sustainable agriculture have made a lasting impact on the farming community.

The ceremony was a heartfelt tribute to the relentless efforts of farmers and agripreneurs, reaffirming MSDS's commitment to sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Latha Suresh & Pradeep Kumar



“Sustainability is not a destination, but a continuous journey.”

Jacob Jose shares with Marie Banu his experience in fairtrade and sustainable agriculture



Jacob Jose is a researcher, author, and business development professional dedicated to sustainable agriculture, fair trade, and community empowerment. As the Manager of Business Development at PDS Organic Spices and Coordinator of the Sahyadri Organic Small Farmers Consortium (SOSFC), he drives market development, organic certification, and capacity-building initiatives for smallholder farmers. Raised in a farming family in Kerala's Kottayam district, his deep-rooted connection to agriculture shaped his career.

A graduate in Chemistry and a postgraduate in Business Administration, he is currently pursuing a PhD in organic product marketing. A published author and global speaker, he actively contributes to agroecology, biodiversity conservation, and organic marketing strategies. <https://www.jacobpoovatholil.online/>

In an exclusive interview Jacob Jose shares with Marie Banu his experience in fairtrade and sustainable agriculture.

What motivated you to switch to the sustainable agriculture sector?

The shift from chemistry to agriculture might seem unusual at first, but the underlying connection is rooted in my upbringing. Coming from an agrarian family, I have always had a deep appreciation for agriculture and rural life. As I completed my studies in business administration and began my research on organic product marketing, I found myself increasingly drawn to the intersection of economic development and ecological responsibility. My time with the Responsible Tourism Initiative played a pivotal role in fostering my passion for sustainable development and community-based agriculture. It was there that I realized how much could be achieved by empowering local communities and integrating them with broader economic and environmental goals. Ultimately, the hands-on experience with Peermade Development Society, where I worked closely with farmers to promote organic farming and fair trade, solidified my interest in this field. Organic farming and ethical trade practices aligned with my personal values, and I felt compelled to pursue this path to help make a tangible impact.

Can you tell us more about Peermade Development Society and its mission?

Peermade Development Society (PDS) is a non-governmental organization that was established in 1980 and is supported by the Catholic Diocese of the region. The organization's primary mission is to empower small and marginal farmers, tribal communities, and women, particularly in the agrarian district of Idukki, located in the Western Ghats. We focus on promoting organic agriculture, fair trade practices, and rural entrepreneurship. PDS aims to uplift the economic status of these communities by facilitating the production of high-quality organic products like spices, coffee, and tea while ensuring that these farmers have access to fair markets and a sustainable income. Additionally, PDS works on various social development projects in collaboration with international agencies like the UN, and national and state government bodies. We prioritize environmental sustainability by focusing on eco-friendly farming practices and supporting rural entrepreneurs in establishing their own businesses.

How do you see fair trade benefiting farmers, especially in terms of sustainability?

For farmers, sustainability is fundamentally tied to

securing a living income. Fair trade ensures that farmers receive a fair price for their produce, which is crucial in a market often dominated by middlemen who drive prices down. Beyond just a fair price, fair trade provides farmers with an additional premium for their produce. This premium is crucial as it allows farmers to invest in improving their social, environmental, and economic conditions. This helps create a sustainable future for the farming community. In contrast to conventional farming systems, where market forces largely control pricing, fair trade offers farmers more control over the pricing mechanism and access to a market that values their products ethically. The fair trade system also ensures that farmers can invest in improving their farming practices, maintain biodiversity, and adopt environmentally sustainable techniques, making it a holistic approach to farming.

With the increasing demand for organic products, how does PDS ensure transparency and traceability in the supply chain?

Transparency and traceability are core principles of the fair trade and organic certification process, and they are integral to our operations. At PDS, we ensure that every product we sell is traceable from farm to fork. This means that every batch of product we purchase from farmers is documented and tracked through every step of the production and distribution process.

This level of transparency helps build trust with consumers, as they can be confident that the products they are purchasing meet ethical standards, and the farmers involved in their production are receiving fair compensation. We also adhere to certification standards, which require traceability, and we work hard to support our farmers in meeting these standards through regular training and assistance with compliance.

How do you support farmers in obtaining organic certifications?

The certification process for organic products can indeed be complex, especially as regulations evolve and become more stringent. To ease the burden on our farmers, we provide a comprehensive support system. First, we conduct capacity-building programs and workshops to educate farmers on organic farming principles and certification requirements. Since the certification standards are often in English or Hindi, which many of our farmers cannot fully understand, we translate them into Malayalam, though the technical terms can still be difficult for them to grasp.

While our farmers have been practicing organic farming techniques for years, certification requires proper documentation of these practices, which is where we step in. We assist with the documentation process, internal inspections, and ensuring that all compliance

criteria are met. Additionally, we offer group certification, which allows farmers to obtain organic certification as a collective rather than individually, thus significantly reducing the cost.

Over the years, have you seen an increase in the number of farmers transitioning to organic farming?

Yes, we have seen a significant increase in the number of farmers transitioning to organic farming, primarily driven by the promise of fair trade premiums and the opportunity to earn a living income. Farmers are also motivated by the knowledge that organic farming helps preserve the environment, protect biodiversity, and promote healthier living. While there are still challenges in meeting certification requirements, the benefits far outweigh the initial hurdles. The growing global demand for organic products also makes organic farming an attractive option. However, due to certification regulations, we can only accept farmers whose land meets specific standards. That said, more and more farmers are seeking support from organizations like PDS to transition to organic farming, and this trend is expected to continue.

What are your marketing strategies to reach consumers, especially with the rise of digital platforms?

Digital platforms have transformed marketing in the organic sector. In our case, storytelling is one of the most effective strategies we employ. By sharing the stories of the farmers, the process of organic farming, and the social impact of our work, we engage consumers who are interested in ethically sourced products. Additionally, we leverage social media campaigns, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, and influencer partnerships to increase brand visibility. These strategies help us build trust with our target audience, which includes ethically conscious consumers both in India and abroad.

We also participate in international trade fairs like BioFach, which is the largest trade fair focused on organic products, to connect with potential buyers. Furthermore, we've established a retail branch called Trubio, which targets specialty organic shops and supermarkets. This is complemented by our online presence on platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and Big Basket, which help us reach a broader customer base.

Is there a particular type of product that consumers are most interested in?

In our range, coffee and tea are the most popular and fast-moving products, especially since both have a significant presence in the international market. That being said, organic vegetables are also gaining momentum, particularly as consumers become more aware of where their food comes from and the traceability of the production process. The demand for organic vegetables will likely continue to grow, especially as consumers seek more transparency and ethical sourcing from their retailers.

Your advice for those interested in fair trade and sustainable agriculture?

Sustainability is not a destination, but a continuous journey. You need to stay rooted in your core purpose—whether it's environmental sustainability, fair trade, or social impact—while being adaptable in your approach. The sector is dynamic and requires flexibility to deal with real-world challenges like climate change, price volatility, and changing regulations.

It's also important to collaborate and network with organizations and groups in the fair trade and organic farming sectors. This will help you create a meaningful impact. Additionally, advocating for policies that support sustainable agriculture and using your platform to educate and influence consumer behaviour can drive industry-wide change.