

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

RNI No.TNENG/2013/52428 | Volume 7 | Issue 12 | December 2019 | 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

COVER STORY

6

ALL ABOARD THE MAGIC BUS

About Magic Bus and its programmes

Alumni Talk



From self to community

3 Venkatesan's efforts through
Makkal Marumalarchi Trust to
empower tribal communities

Profile



Resilience and Afforestation

9 About Vanam India
Foundation in Palladam,
Thiruppur and its activities

Chit Chat



12 "With a growing population and
depleting water resources, we need to
rethink our approach." towards
water management."

An exclusive interview with
Shri Ranganath NK

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

The word 'Harmony' in itself a beautiful word to say. It expresses oneness and peace. When a word could give us this feeling, how much more happier our lives would be if only we moulded our lives to live in harmony.

Ahimsa—founded on the bedrock of amity, forgiveness, tolerance to foster global non-violence, peace and harmony—can be the way forward for humanity. Stern disciplinary actions and coercive approaches may help to maintain law and order, but yet individuals may resort to violence and force to achieve their narrow aims more often than not, disrupting peace.

India is constitutionally a secular country and the diversity that exists in our country in terms of religion, culture and languages is highly unique. It is therefore necessary that we cultivate a national attitude towards India as a united country.

We should have harmony in our thoughts, words, and action. Peace and harmony is long lasting value. If there is peace and harmony in our country, only then, we as a nation can go forward. As our Prime Minister has said, "If 125 crore Indians with the mantra of unity, peace and harmony walk together, shoulder to shoulder, then the country will move 125 crore steps in one go."

Let us take the first step today!

Wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy & Prosperous New Year 2020!

—Marie Banu

EDITORIAL

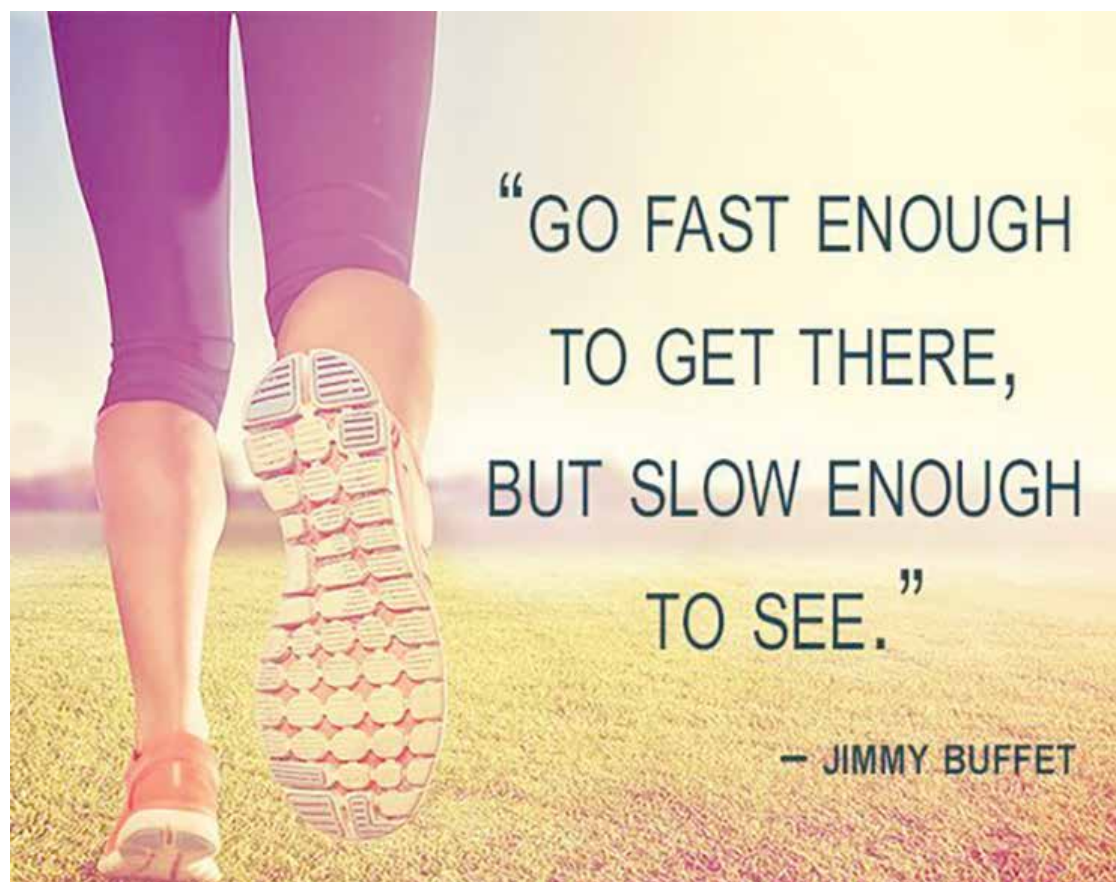
Latha Suresh

Marie Banu

The Challenge of Pace

"The leader who listens is the one society needs most. They don't force their commands on people. They pay attention to their demands and set the pace for the change that society truly needs."

—Israelmore Ayivor, Leaders' Ladder



To do something at a speed that is steady and that allows one to continue without becoming too tired is the definition of pace. This is perhaps something we all need in today's world as we often feel stressed and run down.

Apart from benefitting at an individual level, right pacing helps in relationships as well. When we do not pace ourselves appropriately, one can be restless or impatient and can feel out of sync with others. On the other hand, being slower than what others need could appear like lack of initiative and engagement. At an organizational level, one cannot expect things to go well at the flip of a button. Moving too fast can bring the risk of resistance and increased chances for costly mistakes. Moving too slow, can get people frustrated.

Setting the pace is a process of pitching it right, not too fast and not too slow. How does one do it?

1. Be clear about direction and expectations about results
2. Design daily rituals to achieve results and be disciplined in following it
3. Learn from results
4. Set aside time for reflection- to arrive at an understanding of right pace
5. Take feedback from the team/well wishers
6. Deeply Listen- walkthrough the field of action, sense what preoccupies people, what could be barriers to pace
7. Develop the willingness to pause or accelerate depending on the situation and not on own need for completion

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.

From self to community



Development is understood and interpreted in many ways by different social groups based on their own experiences. That is what makes it more intriguing everyday. “Authorities, statutory bodies and civil society have been playing their respective roles. Yet, the wide range of unfinished tasks offer opportunities to amateurs like me who strive to make a small difference somewhere,” says Mr M Venkatesan, Founder of Makkal Marumalarchi Trust in Thiruporur, Chengalpeta. Coming from the Irular community, he is fully aware of the struggles any tribal teenager has to overcome to reach a respectable position in the society.

Venkatesan hails from Nandivaram in Guduvanchery, Chennai and was brought up by his widowed mother whose only source of income was from domestic labour. Soon after his graduation he took up a job in a private company. “My recruitment itself gave me a new sense of respect. Is that all? Am I content? My self introspection soon drew me to resignation because I was in no way adding value to my community,” says Venkatesan, who felt that his sense of self respect must emanate from his contribution to the upliftment of vulnerable tribal youngsters who are often lost without proper guidance.

“To me tribal development is more intriguing, because we have to stand up against the deprivation our community has suffered since independence. The presence of our community members who are completely unaware of their entitlements in this era is a testimony to the fact that a lot needs to be done,” he asserts.

It took seven years for Venkatesan to get his community certificate, that authorises his identity to avail scholarships and welfare services provided by the government. To him, it meant loss of opportunities that came his way during those years. Resolving to help others, Venkatesan began his journey from Thamizhaga Aadivasigal Kootamaipu. Enabling students get their community certificates, families acquire land allotted to them, and fighting encroachments on lands that belonged to tribal families—became his regular work. “A community certificate is the doorway for social upliftment. The fact that many have to wait for years to get it is a clear indication of the distance between tribal communities and institutions. Every effort I took up needed diligent attention to details and entailed meticulous homework. If this is what the community needed, I cannot give up,” says a committed Venkatesan.

Makkal Marumalarchi Trust was established in 2018 to take his mission forward in a systematic manner. However, Venkatesan feels that the establishment of this trust allowed people to approach him and his team more easily. It also gave an identity to their efforts, allowing him to strengthen his team with new and experienced members. “We work with officials on a daily basis. The credibility we earned not only brought people in need to us but



also like minded individuals who dreamt of tribal development in its true sense. Bringing them all together has been the biggest success to me,” says Venkatesan.

Knowing the strengths of being together, he attempted the formation of men self-help groups. Apart from the regular micro credit services and bank linkages, Venkatesan ensured that these groups were educated about rights and entitlements provided by the state and central governments, and that they passed on all useful information to fellow members and families. “After all, awareness is the first step towards empowerment,” he says.

Land for landless tribal people came in after a long struggle endured by our great leaders. However its execution is a long standing disappointment. Venkatesan and team have helped more than 75 families in Keezhkottai reclaim their land. In some cases, it was necessary to engage with the State Human Rights Commission as well. The success of this land reclamation resonated and more families from Gundri village in Erode district approached him. Over 125 families were

given land pattas before 15 years but they were all encroached. “Our team is now doing all the home work to study the innards of this case. Such detailed documentation is a skill and I thank CSIM for educating me about this,” says Venkatesan.

Strategising social objectives has helped him build a vision for his trust. The mission building exercises gave him the much needed clarity on organising all efforts and build team expertise to promote tribal welfare. CSIM has helped him visualise his work in that direction and in so doing, it has once again brought a renewed focus on self empowerment. “All these small steps are critical to inspire the next generation to dream of a better future. When we hear children discuss about higher education and the courses they look forward to pursue we are reassured about our work,” he claims. The team also promotes registration with the local employment exchange to secure unfilled job positions reserved for Scheduled Tribes. Venkatesan is now supervising a survey to study the scope of training tribal youth to appear for exams to government services. “Public Service Commission exams are a huge opportunity and training our children to crack them will also help next generation dream higher. Aspirations will push them to new heights and their success will promote welfare of the entire community,” he says, breathing in a huge sense of responsibility.

—Shanmuga Priya. T

Embodiment of Ability

MITHRA caters to the needs of children and young adults afflicted with cerebral palsy, on the Autism spectrum, Down Syndrome and multiple disabilities.



An organization's history is as important as an organization's future. When tackling social stigma and superstition along with advancements in medical research, it becomes doubly important to keep a note of every step made towards progress. It is with this intention that when talking about Mithra, it seems important to start with the story of its founder, Sr. Mary Theodore OAM.

"God's Donkey"

Sr. Mary Theodore OAM was a nun from Australia. She had trained as an administrator and served in World War II before opting for the religious life. As a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, she travelled to India in 1951.

She worked in many places in India as an educator and a social worker. It was in 1977, after years of interacting with hundreds of poor children with intellectual and physical disabilities that she decided to establish MITHRA- a care and rehabilitation centre for disabled children without discrimination of any kind. She saw herself as that most humble of servants that did whatever God required for his poorest children and hence gave herself the moniker "God's Donkey". True to the nickname, she would go on to tirelessly work in the service of children and adults with disability for 61 long years, until her passing in 2012. She was the first Area Director for Special Olympics and

introduced the value of sports and games to these differently abled. As the first President of the State level umbrella organisation "Federation of Organisations for Persons with Disabilities" she was instrumental in organising the first State level conference in which the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu announced the historic monthly financial assistance scheme for the differently abled. In her lifetime, Sr. Mary Theodore's work was recognized with various prestigious awards, the most notable one being conferred with the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 1991. Her work not just touched the lives of thousands of people with disabilities in India, but also

inspired hundreds of her admirers in Australia to take up service of others. It is Sr. Mary Theodore's story that is written all over the premises of MITHRA today.

MITHRA caters to the needs of children and young adults afflicted with cerebral palsy, on the Autism spectrum, Down Syndrome and multiple disabilities. Says Dr. Sukumar the Director of MITHRA, "Our priority is to those from the poorer sections. We are open to everyone irrespective of religion, caste, creed or gender. Our aim is to make them (the persons with disability) as independent as possible and to improve their quality of life."

Their programmes are five-fold. They

have an Early Intervention programme through Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Speech Therapy. The campus has a Special School where basic concepts at pre-primary and primary levels are taught. Those with academic potential are encouraged to study further through the National Open School system which offers flexible and structured learning, making them eligible to appear in the Std. X and XII examinations. The Vocational Training programme provide them with skills in craftsmanship such as paper-bags, bath towels and floor mats, embroidery and tailoring, perfumed and decorative candle-making, vegetable and fruit cultivation and gardening. The organization relies on the strength of their volunteer base to fulfil many of these programmes.

Recognizing the need for young adults, especially girls need to possess essential life skills, MITHRA, in collaboration with the Theo Foundation provides training to young women on their personal hygiene needs. They also learn cooking, house-keeping, laundry and bakery. MITHRA operates a hostel facility with dedicated boys' and girls' dormitories where safe living and nutritious food is provided.

The perception about disability has changed a lot in the past 40 years. When asked about some of the palpable changes today, Dr. Sukumar observes, "When Mithra was started there were few organisations working in this sector. Governmental effort and support was negligible. There were no separate laws for the disabled and they were clubbed together under the act for the mentally ill. Awareness about rehabilitation was lacking. Today a separate act for persons with disabilities has been enacted, a National Trust for persons with disabilities at the central level assists and coordinates the work in the States; a separate department with district level offices look after the needs of the disabled and more institutions both in Chennai and the districts have sprung up in this sector."

Stories of Success

Over the years, MITHRA has had several success stories. Prabhavathi, a woman with muscular dystrophy came in as a child and over the years, completed 12th grade through NIOS and then acquired a B.A in Sociology through the Tamil Nadu Open University. She gained proficiency in computer applications and is now employed in Mithra itself teaching computer basics to other children.

"Wabhi-Sabhi Café"

Young adult women who were trained in the Life Skills programme organised a pop-up food-stall called Wabhi-Sabhi café to exhibit their talent in preparing snacks and refreshments. The pop-up received rave reviews from well-wishers and parents who enjoyed the dishes and the girls earned the appreciation of all including the chief guest Mr. Ravi who is the Chief Chef at one of the luxury hotels in Chennai.

Being a voluntary charitable organisation in the disability sector, MITHRA's work is very human resource centric with a lot of manual work. Dr. Sukumar says that getting qualified professionals who are able to volunteer their time and energy into these activities is tricky. "Our challenge is to provide sustainable services to more people from poorer sections who cannot afford to pay for our services. This places a greater pressure on our fundraising skills to meet the ever-increasing recurring costs of these services"

Dr. Sukumar's vision is to create avenues for workforce-integration and self-employment for trained adults of MITHRA. He is researching new and innovative vocational training models towards this end. "Most parents worry that there may be no one to support their dependent offspring, after they (the parents) pass on," says Dr. Sukumar. He aims to build an assisted living facility that would address this specific need, soon.

—Archanaa Ramesh



Centre for Social Initiative and Management

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

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

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

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

Contact Persons:

Ms. Marie Banu
Director, Chennai
@ 9884700029

Mr. Ramesh Balasundaram
Director, Bangalore
@ 9845211311

Mr. K L Srivastava
Director, Hyderabad
@ 91-9912656112

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

ALL ABOARD THE MAGIC BUS!



Since 1999, Magic Bus has worked tirelessly with children and youngsters across India, plagued by poverty. The aim was simple: transform a childhood full of challenges to a more meaningful life by imparting skills and academic know-how that would help them make a decent livelihood for themselves. The NGO has looked at targeting children between the age group of 12 and 18.

Speaking of challenges, there are plenty. Some of these include child labour and child marriage. Most children, according to the organization’s website, complete their secondary education and go on to

become first-generation salary-earners after having secured a job in the organized sector. The organization’s youth-centric livelihood programme goes a long way in connecting aspirations with potential, and thereby capitalize on market opportunities that are up for grabs. The organization has focused on employability skills in an attempt to trace out potential at the workplace, based on a child’s strength and mobility.

Magic Bus story began exactly 20 years when it was founded by Matthew Spacie in 1999. Since inception, the NGO has transformed the lives and

future of nearly one million children. The organization now boasts of 5,500 young leaders who are in the process of mentoring other children by way of sports activity-based sessions to children across 798 schools. A total of 42 “livelihood centres” across the country have seen 10,000 children trained, and nearly 7,000 of these children placed in the organized sector. The organization also has presence in Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The story of Magic Bus traces its origins to a Sunday in 1999, when a group of slum children in Mumbai clambered onto a bus. They were heading to

the beaches and hills on the city’s outskirts — an escape from the dreary everyday life in Mumbai that they were contending with. It was their first taste of change, and an introduction to the opportunity of more change that lay ahead. They were a team and this was their ‘Magic Bus’.

Magic Bus rolled into Chennai in August 2012 thanks to a football tournament that was organized in the city. A total of 45 children from various neighbouring districts took part in the tournament, which saw kids play real football, albeit on a smaller scale. In the end the participants posed proudly with their certificates and medals. It was a start.

Magic Bus started its operations in Tamil Nadu in 2011 and the focus zones of impact were on education, health, gender, personal social development, right to play, and life skills. This was especially important since the organization was focusing on its ‘Sports for development’ initiative. Sports for development on all the above zones were implemented under their childhood to livelihood’ project. As the uniqueness of playing a sport is a tool to development, Magic Bus managed to pull something off along those lines, for these children.

In Tamil Nadu, Magic Bus has so far

reached out to nearly 16,000 children. But the organization wants to hit 25,000 and plans to reach out to nearly 25,000 children. They are looking to implement our ‘childhood to livelihood’ project in districts like Thiruvallur, Villupuram, Thiruvanamalai and Ariyalur as the crucial requirement of life skills is required for rural children and youth, hence these pockets within the state.

and the youth. Based on this outreach, their scope for expansion will be looked at and planned, accordingly.

In its journey so far, Magic Bus has seen many a success story. It has also boasted of some inspiring journeys and stories that have been scripted by the children that it has taken under its wing. This includes accounts of standing up against domestic abuse, the fight to find a job in pursuit of

Magic Bus started its operations in Tamil Nadu in 2011 and the focus zones of impact were on education, health, gender, personal social development, right to play, and life skills.

The group’s expansion plans will be scripted based on its progress surrounding its proposed outreach to 25,000 children in Tamil Nadu. Magic Bus focuses on delivering a quality programme, that will have strong development outcomes in education, health and gender, by way of which they can work consistently to bring about impact in the lives of children

dignity, and creating inclusiveness and interest in sports. In India, the organization has impacted 3.75 lakh children and over 1,000 youth. It has spanned 22 states, 80 districts and 930 schools. The organization has set up 42 livelihood centres and 1961 communities. Its overseas record is also extremely impressive. In Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar, Magic Bus

has touched the lives of 6,000 children through 80 community coordinators. It has created 40 communities across three states and three districts, in all.

Through the journey of Magic Bus, the NGO has accounted for a 37 percent increase in children attending school regularly. What’s more? Less than five percent of girl students have dropped out of by Class 8, while 95 percent of these students do not get married before the age of 18. Nearly 70 percent of students trained in Magic Bus’ livelihood programme are placed in salaried jobs and earn an average income of 10,287 rupees per month.

All these efforts have resulted in a better tomorrow for a million children across the length and breadth of the country, and the global neighbourhood. While most children have lived in abject poverty and haven’t been exposed to academics or sports, the opportunities provided by Magic Bus has helped most of these children and youth to lead better lives, with scope for education and employment. By expanding across the country, and reaching out to more schools and districts, the organization has proven time and time again how quality outreach always helps bring cheer and a better life to those captured by the throes of poverty.

Once a street kid, now a future school teacher

Grit got Angel into school. Tahanan gave her a home — and hope.



“You’ll just end up marrying early.

Your mother went to school but look where she is now.”

These words, uttered by others living alongside her on the streets, once haunted Sharry Angel Getigan, who used to sleep rough in Manila’s alleyways.

Her grandfather would sometimes tie her to a tree, so that she wouldn’t wander off while he peddled cigarettes, but none of these experiences dimmed Angel’s dreams of going to school.

Yet even as she devoured her school books and scored good grades — often on an empty stomach — doubt gnawed at Angel.

“At night, I would look at the sky and pray: ‘Is there another side to my life? Will there come a time where it’s a ceiling I see before I sleep?’” shares Angel.

Raised by her grandfather after her mother became addicted to drugs, Angel, as a child, was fascinated by the children

she saw going to school in smartly pressed uniforms.

So she asked her grandfather to enrol her in school. He did — by taking a copy of her cousin’s birth certificate, erasing the name, and adding Angel’s instead.

Angel’s determination was enough to help her excel in school, but it was a chance encounter that landed her on a firmer step to a better life.

“A friend of mine asked me to join a meeting. In one of the meetings, I met street kids who turned out successful,” recalls Angel.

“Most of them came from shelters. I asked one of them to bring me to one of the shelters. She brought me to Tahanan Sta Luisa.”

Founded in 1999, Tahanan (Tagalog for “home”), is an intervention centre for street girls, who are often vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, such as trafficking.

Providing shelter, counselling and basic education, it seeks to help the girls

recover, reconcile with their families where possible, and acquire skills needed to lead independent lives.

They are usually referred to the centre by social workers and outreach educators from other non-profits or agencies. Some have families that could not care for them, and some are survivors of sexual abuse or prostitution.

Taking up to 23 girls at a time, Tahanan has supported 560 girls, as of July 2018.

Going from the streets to a cosy bedroom took some getting used to — on her first night at the shelter, Angel couldn’t sleep “because my bed was so soft”.

“There was a fan, a blanket, a pillow, there was a door,” says Angel. “I was so happy.”

At Tahanan, Angel found a home — a safe space that enabled her to stay in school. “They felt like our mothers,” says Angel, referring to the centre’s staff.

She is now pursuing a degree at

University of the Philippines, with Tahanan sponsoring part of the cost, and plans to become a teacher.

“I want to inspire my future students that, ‘If my teacher came from the streets and succeeded, I can also achieve my dreams’.”

ABOUT TAHANAN STA LUISA

Tahanan Sta Luisa in Manila, Philippines, has been helping street children since 1999, through an intervention centre that provides shelter, counselling and basic education. Working with local authorities and other social services agencies, it has supported 560 girls to date.

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

Resilience and Afforestation

Humankind is more vulnerable now than ever due to new and complicated challenges posed by development practices and climate change alike. We have reached a juncture where resilience must be understood as a survival strategy. By survival, we are compelled to think of all flora and fauna in order to protect the delicate balance that has allowed human existence. “Where better to start with, than trees in a drought prone region,” asks Mr Sky V Sundararajan, Founder Secretary of Vanam India Foundation in Palladam, Thiruppur.

Adhering to the message of Perur Adhinam Santhalinga Swami Adikalar delivered on his 90th birthday, his devotees and friends decided to start a movement to plant more trees in the drought prone district of Thiruppur. Given the situations faced due to persistent drought conditions over the years, the response was spellbinding. Support came in from far and near and the team was overwhelmed everybody felt the need to recreate greener communities. Very soon, the team decided to drive this initiative into a movement in order to have a long and wider impact. “There had been enough incidents for people to realise how important it was to stay closer to nature. Mankind cannot go away from nature nor can it live without it. Unless we choose a way back to nature, we are jeopardising our very existence,” he warns.

Vanam India Foundation was established in 2015 to take Adikalar’s message forward. The dream of a greener Palladam drew individuals from all walks of life to plant and adopt trees. “Planting trees is not as straight forward as it sounds. We purchase water to nurture the trees. Drought has affected our ability to enable a natural revival,” says Sundararajan, adding that the foundation has planted over 3.5 lakh saplings. The organisation’s strength lies in its resolve to ensure that every sapling planted gets to grow into a tree, without succumbing to heat or diseases. “It’s a huge responsibility to work towards a greener community. We prepare ourselves and our team of tree protectors and volunteers through regular workshops where knowledge on plant growth and strategies are shared and learnt,” he explains. The Vanam team has travelled across India and other countries like Israel, Vietnam and Cambodia to learn about farming, irrigation practices in dry and drought prone regions.

Dreaming for a better future is a collective responsibility and it calls for the participation of younger generation too, as they will be responsible for protecting the results of today’s efforts. Vanalayam is an eighteen-acre piece of land donated by one of the Trustees, Mr Ganeshwar, dedicated for the plantation programmes. School children and other volunteers are invited here to learn about nature friendly lifestyle. “It is



Vanam India Foundation, with the technical support from Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai promoted the use of filters that recharge ground water tables naturally.

very important to show our children the ease and need to adapt to nature friendly practices. Unless they see it happening, they won’t know that it is possible and practical too,” says Sundararajan. It must also be noted that the team takes

conscious efforts to plant native species of plants that were lost due to different reasons and also those at the verge of extinction, to protect biodiversity.

While planting trees is a regular programme at the foundation, the team also works on other aspects that support the success of these programmes in the long term. Rain water harvesting, for instance, is a pressing need in Palladam. Depleted ground water resources and dependence on external sources has affected regular life so much that when the idea was proposed, people took to it earnestly. Vanam India Foundation, with the technical support from Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai promoted the use of filters that recharge ground water tables naturally. More than 250 households in Palladam have adopted this practice and as a result,

they manage all their drinking water needs throughout the year without depending on the supply of water by the City Corporation. “This is a big leap for us. Given the scarcity, we could actually quantify the impact of rain water harvesting. Where there is need, it is only a matter of awareness that can trigger the change,” says Sundararajan.

The cause Vanam works for and the reach it has had so far did not come easy. The team had to confront many challenges and the availability of water was the most pressing of all. This perhaps is also the reason why rain water harvesting and drip irrigation methods are extensively studied, practiced and promoted. Different irrigation methods are also analysed and taught to local farmers through practical workshops. While knowledge helped a great deal in overcoming this challenge, Sundararajan feels that sourcing funds was a greater impediment to their cause and remains to be. “Our work does not promise income. It only involves expenditure and results are only in the long term. Hence, the struggle in raising funds,” he admits.

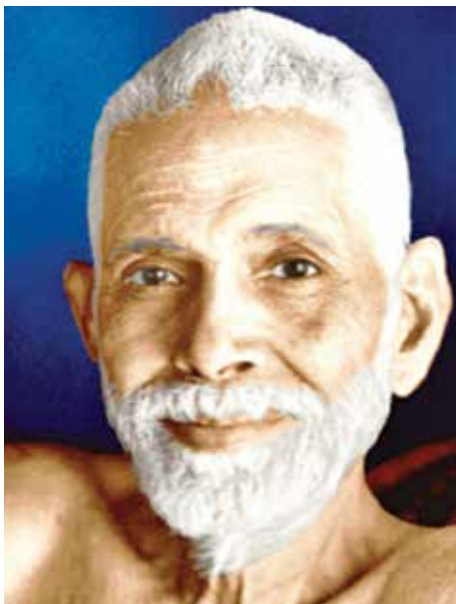
Despite the challenges and struggles involved, Vanam India Foundation continues to work with determination. Convinced that only trees can lead us back to nature, their endeavour encourages everybody to dream of a greener neighbourhood. “One cannot imagine nature without trees. Trees provide us clean air, recharge ground water, prevent soil erosion and provide food. Survival of all other species depend on trees. Let us protect what we have and plant as many as we can. Because, we have to!,” he insists.

— Shanmuga Priya.T

Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

Maj. A. W. Chadwick: Of what nature is the realisation of Westerners who relate that they have had flashes of cosmic consciousness?

M.: It came as a flash and disappeared as such. That which has a beginning must also end. Only when the ever-present consciousness is realised will it be permanent. Consciousness is indeed always with us. Everyone knows 'I am!' No one can deny his own being. The man in deep slumber is not aware; while awake he seems to be aware. But it is the same person. There is no change in the one who slept and the one who is now awake. In deep sleep he was not aware of his body; there was no body-consciousness. In the wakeful state he is aware of his body; there is body-consciousness. Therefore the difference lies in the emergence of body-consciousness and not in any change in the Real Consciousness. The body and body-consciousness arise together and sink together. All this amounts to saying that there are no limitations in deep sleep, whereas there are limitations in the waking state. These limitations are the bondage; the feeling 'The body is I' is the error. This false sense of 'I' must



go. The real 'I' is always there. It is here and now. It never appears anew and disappears again. That which is must also persist for ever. That which appears anew will also be lost. Compare deep sleep and waking. The body appears in one state but not in the other. Therefore the body will be lost. The consciousness was pre-existent and will survive the body. In fact, there is no one who does not say 'I am'. The wrong knowledge of 'I am the body' is the cause of all the mischief. This

wrong knowledge must go. That is Realisation. Realisation is not acquisition of anything new nor it is a new faculty. It is only removal of all camouflage.

Maj. Chadwick: I try to shake off the body.

M.: A man shakes off his clothes and remains alone and free. The Self is unlimited and is not confined to the body. How can the body be shaken off? Where will he leave it? Wherever it is, it is his still.

Maj. Chadwick: (Laughter.)

M.: The ultimate Truth is so simple. It is nothing more than being in the pristine state. This is all that need be said.

Still, it is a wonder that to teach this simple Truth there should come into being so many religions, creeds, methods and disputes among them and so on! Oh the pity! Oh the pity!

Maj. Chadwick: But people will not be content with simplicity; they want complexity.

M.: Quite so. Because they want something elaborate and attractive and puzzling, so many religions have come

into existence and each of them is so complex and each creed in each religion has its own adherents and antagonists.

For example, an ordinary Christian will not be satisfied unless he is told that God is somewhere in the far-off Heavens not to be reached by us unaided. Christ alone knew Him and Christ alone can guide us. Worship Christ and be saved. If told the simple truth - "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you" - he is not satisfied and will read complex and far-fetched meanings in such statements. Mature minds alone can grasp the simple Truth in all its nakedness.

Maj. Chadwick later expressed a certain involuntary fear while meditating. He feels the spirit separated from the gross body and the sensation creates a fright.

M.: To whom is the fright? It is all due to the habit of identifying the body with the Self. Repeated experience of separation will make one familiar and the fright will cease.

—Source: *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Pride



A charger, beautifully groomed and equipped, one day came galloping along a road, exciting the envy of an ass who was trudging along with a heavy load. "Get out of my way!" cried the proud horse, "or I shall trample you under my feet." The poor animal said nothing and quietly moved to one side of the road.

Not long afterwards the charger went to the wars, and was badly wounded on the battlefield. Unfit for further military service, he was sent home to work on the farm. The ass saw him there, painfully dragging a heavy wagon. "Ah!" said he to himself, "I need not have envied him then, but for his pride, he would have had a true friend to help him in his need to lighten his load."

Explicit Learning

- Pride goes before a fall.
- Modesty brings friends, while pride leaves you alone.
- He who despises a humble friend may be doing an ill turn to himself.

Introspective Learning

- What is the nature of 'Pride'?
- What is the basis of my pride?
- How do I deal with my pride?

Endowment Lecture



Paying a tribute to PND is to celebrate the word, thought, and the deeds he did. It is also celebrate the spirit that challenges these word and thoughts that underlined the deeds. The first endowment lecture in memory of Late Shri P.N. Devarajan was held on November 30, 2019 at Anna University - Alumni Club, Boat Club Road, Chennai. The programme was organised by Indian Institute of Chemical engineers Chennai Regional Centre.

Shri. Mafoi K. Pandiarajan, Hon'ble Minister for Tamil, Tamil Development and Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, was the Chief Guest for the event. Shri N. Nagarajan, Chairman IICChE delivered the welcome address.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Mafoi Pandiarajan said: "I met PND in 1991, at a phase when he was at his rustic best. I was Head of HRM services and Marketing for an engineering company and this was the beginning of my interaction with him. At first, I saw him as a very tough and demanding person. He was part of the Mr. Krishnamurthy's team and a set of corporate Chief's who were politically savvy. Our relationship continued when he went to Reliance.

We had phenomenal discussions and I could see the idea of value chain come alive. He could connect the dots. Shri PN Devarajan was to Chemical engineering what Shri M. Visvesvaraya was to Civil engineering. A lot of public sector companies that happened during this time has been his brain child. His idea of what to report and what not to report; and what kinds of down streams need to happen – helped me to understand the idea of value chain. His philosophy was seeing the link in skill scope and depth in business.

I started a business and moved on. We touch based again when he dedicated his life for 'giving' after his retirement. His thoughts on 'Giving' in his authorised biography 'The Pathfinder' has views as sharp as a knife, which often hurts.

Around 2000 I had just joined BJP when my business was doing very well. We used to meet at Raj Bhavan, when Shri Ram Mohan Rao was the Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu and had a good equation with PND.

PND's next avatar was in Social entrepreneurship where he brought in a lot of concepts and made it live for many people



like us. It was a western idea and the term venture capital was getting popular in the commercial area during the late 90's. The NGO community owes it to PND for introducing them to Social Entrepreneurship as he postulated the idea very well. He also launched training in social entrepreneurship through CSIM (Centre for Social Initiative and Management).

We conceived the idea of CIOA (Confederation of Indian Organisations for Service and Advocacy). At first, we had 10 NGOs and now we have close to 300 NGOs in our fold. I still remember the day when we used to have endless conversations on what one needs to do with one's life. He used to say that NGOS should have integration and advocated for 4 Ts – Time, Talent, Treasure and Touch. We discussed about NGO integration and I enjoyed the humongous long meetings. He was an idea generator or rather an idea bull dozer."

PND was a personality who believed in the power of the written word. His authorised biography – The Pathfinder - is a must read as it shows us PND's way of life.

We miss him and believe that he continues to inspire and guide us in all that we do.

—Marie Banu



Tribute



Dr. Nirmala Prasad has been CSIM's mentor since its inception. She passed away on the 5th of December and left a legacy of positive experiences for anyone who knew her.

Dr. Prasad had helped set up and head the commerce department at Ethiraj College for Women where she worked for about 20 years before joining M. O. P. Vaishnav College in 1997. Post-retirement, she was active in social and business enterprises and community initiatives.

She introduced a host of innovative programmes and classes at M. O. P. Vaishnav College and the focus was on entrepreneurship, to enable students to broaden their vision and perspective and intern even as they attended to studies on campus. She was instrumental to build CSIM into the brand it is today. She had a passion for social entrepreneurship and enabled joint certification for CSIM's Post Graduate Diploma in Social Initiative and Management at MOP Vaishnav College for Women which led to creating over 450 social change agents.

Dr. Prasad was known to be a smart administrator with a no-nonsense approach. She served as member of the Syndicate of University of Madras for three terms, a record and made significant contributions to revamping and upgrading commerce syllabus for under-graduate students.

Being CSIM's Governing Council member, she was always encouraging and connected us with her networks. She also launched a 30-hour module on Social entrepreneurship at Department of Sociology of MOP which was conducted by CSIM until a few years ago.

She was a visionary educator. Her passing away is truly an end of an era. She inspired generations of women to become the best version of themselves, no matter their professions, and galvanized formidable capacity to vastly improve women's education both in Tamil Nadu and Globally.

We at CSIM extend our condolences to her family and friends and pray that her soul rests in peace.

—Latha Suresh

“With a growing population and depleting water resources, we need to rethink our approach.”

Ranganath NK shares with Marie Banu an integrated approach to manage water and wastewater.

Shri Ranganath N K is the area Managing Director, INDO region, Grundfos. He joined Grundfos in February 1998 and established Grundfos India in March 1998. He has more than 36 years of industry experience covering marketing, sales, design, project management, finance and human resources.

Prior to joining Grundfos, Ranganath was the Director of IAEC Industries. His first job was with Eicher Tractors in sales. He has been involved in technology transfer to India from other countries including Denmark and his focus has been on Water and Energy Conservation.

He holds a Degree in Mechanical Engineering from College of Engineering, Guindy (1978) and Post-Graduation in Business Administration (P.G.D.B.A.) from XLRI, Jamshedpur (1980).

Ranganath is currently the co-chair of the CII National committee on water and the Southern regional Chair for the committee on ease of doing business.

He has been a member of CII National Committees on Manufacturing, Water, CSR and Skill Development. He also has held positions of: Member of the Executive Council of Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), Past Chairman of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Tamil Nadu Council, Past Chairman of AEEE (Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy) and Past President of Madras Management Association.

In an exclusive interview, Shri Ranganath NK shares with Marie Banu an integrated approach to manage water and wastewater.

Grundfos is focused on promoting the UN Sustainability Development Goal (SDG) 6, which focuses on water and SDG 13 which focuses on climate change. Can you tell us about your efforts in these areas so far?

We operate our business with sustainability as a core mindset and have anchored our innovative solutions in order to contribute to the UN's Sustainability Development Goals (6 and 13). We have a three-pronged approach towards these SDGs.

Firstly, from a business opportunities perspective, we have identified specific demand-supply gaps for sustainable products and have been working towards bridging this gap. Secondly, from a risk perspective, we have analysed our risks to evaluate any damage to the

environment and understand best practices that can be followed. Thirdly, from a community perspective, Grundfos has been collaborating with various stakeholders such as NGOs, governments and our own employees through constructive dialogues and platforms.

Since 2008, we have successfully managed to reduce water consumption by over 34% and reduce our CO2 emissions by 31% globally. From 2014, we have also been able to help over 1.6 million people globally access clean drinking water. These are just a few testaments of our commitment to creating an environmentally sustainable future.

About the solar-powered pumping systems in 100 villages in India launched by Grundfos Foundation and Sunlit Future?

India has over 700,000 water deprived villages. Understanding the implications of water scarcity and its impact on communities, we partnered with Sunlit Future in 2014 to provide 100 solar pumps to 100 villages.

The solar-powered pumping systems with Grundfos' SQ Flex pumps will ensure a stable water supply for each village. The SQ Flex pump motor is constructed especially for energy sources with varying voltage, such as solar energy or wind power. Furthermore, the pumps are extremely energy efficient and long-lasting.

Grundfos India already has thousands of solar pump installations across Maharashtra, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. Through these solar pump solutions, Grundfos India has helped create a positive impact on the socio-economic lives of thousands of people in rural India.

The project was undertaken in four phases across villages in Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. This '100 pumps, 100 villages' initiative positively impacted over 50,000 people in these states.

With government planning to give a push to renewable energy sector, are you seeing an increase in demand for solar-powered pumps in the country?

The Indian government's ambitious target to reach 450 GW renewable energy capacity has definitely rejuvenated the interest in the sector. Solar energy solutions are driving the growth due to some of the lowest tariffs in the world.



The Prime Minister's KUSUM scheme has further increased the availability of solar pumps at subsidized costs to farmers. This has helped increase awareness and large-scale adoption of these pumps in off grid or remote areas. With over 2 lakh pumps installed till date, we are seeing an increased interest in making efficient solar pumps a preferred alternative.

Your thoughts on integrated approach to managing water and wastewater?

With a growing population and depleting water resources, we need to rethink our approach towards water management by engaging with stakeholders and implementing the right technology. The Ministry of Jal Shakti has been able help us set water goals and come up with a unified strategy to tackle challenges.

A shift towards a circular economy where water is reused multiple times will help optimize water usage, reuse and consumption. Wastewater treatment is a critical component in a successful circular economy. Collaborative efforts

are needed to ensure that wastewater treatments are a mainstay in our homes, offices and municipalities. Wastewater should be treated as a source of water and therefore water should be priced similarly to electricity.

Can NGOs associate with Grundfos in taking your mission forward? If so, what are the processes involved?

We are always on the lookout for the right partner to help us augment our community campaigns. In the past, we have worked with several NGOs like Hand in Hand and Sunlit Future and other local NGOs to create awareness, provide training and improve access to clean, drinking water.

We are also working on restoring water bodies in Chennai – thereby improving the water quality and recharging the water table in these locations. Besides, we work with the CII on promoting water stewardship and increasing awareness on water management and conservation.