

Conversations Today

Your journal about the world of NGOs and Social Enterprises

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COVER STORY

6

GO INCLUSIVE, BUILD A BETTER TOMORROW

About Association of People with Disabilities (APD) and their programs in rural and urban Karnataka

Alumni Talk



Profile



Chit Chat



3

They are like my own children

Dhanalakshmi's efforts to provide education for special children through Abhaya Pradha Education Society

9

Engaging with Migrant Workers

Aajeevika Bureau in Rajasthan, that provides a platform for interaction with migrant workers

12

"If CSR projects focus more on the agriculture sector, it would mitigate the distress of farmers."

An exclusive interview with Shri. Gagandeep Singh Bedi IAS

FROM THE EDITOR

"My advice to other disabled people would be, concentrate on things your disability doesn't prevent you doing well, and don't regret the things it interferes with. Don't be disabled in spirit as well as physically."

—Stephen Hawking

Dear Friend,

In India, according to the 2011 Census, 2.21% of the population has one or multiple types of disabilities, making the country home to one of the largest disabled populations in the world. World Bank data suggest that the numbers are nearly four-five times higher.

There is a lot of discussion of how disability is described. The literal meaning of disability is "difficulty with ability". This implies some form of mental or physical impairment that can manifest problems with mobility or awareness.

According to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, disability impairments can include sensory impairments such as hearing or sight, mental impairments such as depression or learning difficulties and physical impairments such as wheelchair users.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 replaced the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, and recognised 21 kinds of disabilities, including dwarfism, speech and language disability, and three blood disorders. The new Act also increased the quota for disability reservation in higher educational institutions from 3% to 5% and in government jobs from 3% to 4%, for a more inclusive society.

However, legislation alone is not sufficient. In an era where 'inclusive development' is being emphasised as the right path towards sustainable development, focussed initiatives for the welfare of disabled persons are essential.

For years, companies have maintained low expectations about hiring people with disabilities. But, things are changing now. With increased awareness, many employers have come to understand that these perceptions are untrue. In fact, several researches strongly suggests hiring people with disabilities as it is good for business and also reduces attrition.

There are several not-for-profit organisations working for the welfare of the disabled in our country and Conversations Today has featured a few.

Let us focus on the ability of persons with disability and be conscious of that.

Marie Banu

EDITORIAL

Latha Suresh
Marie Banu

Seed of the Divine



‘Seed of the Divine’ a book authored by Dr .C. K.

Gariyali IAS was released on 13 May 2019 at Arkey Convention Centre, Luz, Mylapore Chennai by Padmabhushan Shri N. Gopalaswami IAS, former Chief Election Commissioner of India, currently serving as the Chairman of Kalakshetra.

The book is the 3rd book in the spiritual genre written by Dr C. K Gariyali IAS and published by Saraswathi Educational Cultural and Charitable Trust.

In this book, Dr Gariyali has written about the life journey of Mrs Kim Fraser, a Caucasian woman born in a Catholic family who worked as a barrister in Australia and went on to become an Indian style spiritual guru named Shakthi Durga and is now the leader of a Hindu religious organisation based in Australia.

Shakthi Durga realised that her spiritual guru was Sri Narayani Amma of the Sri Narayani Peetam and Golden Temple of Vellore, Tamil Nadu and has dedicated her life to spreading peace, harmony and oneness with nature.

Sri Sakthi Narayani Amma, affectionately known as Amma, is an esteemed spiritual leader in India. In 1995, Amma founded the Sri Narayani Peedam, a spiritual centre in a remote village called Thirumalaikodi, located near Vellore in Southern India. Charitable activities at Peedam include free healthcare at a the Sri Narayani

Hospital and Research Centre which opened in 2004.

Dr CK Gariyali had been acquainted with Sri Narayani Amma for over two decades and was a regular visitor to the Golden Temple located at Vellore. In 2013, she had made Newcastle, Australia her second home spending half the year with her family residing in Australia. On one of her regular visits to the Vellore Golden Temple that year, she was informed of a Australian guru from Newcastle who had visited the temple. Upon her return to Australia, Dr Gariyali was on a quest to locate the ashram but had very little information on where to start looking. With the grace of the divine, Dr Gariyali stumbled upon a devotee who then introduced her to the ashram. Unknowingly she went to the retreat only to discover a photo of Sri Narayani Amma in the hall. Thus began the intriguing journey of the book ‘The Seed of the Divine’.

Padmabhushan Dr. R. Nagaswamy, world renowned archeologist and Indologist received the first copy of the book from Sri N. Gopalaswami amongst other important dignitaries.

—Priya Rajkumar

Dr C. K Gariyali is from the 1973 batch of the IAS and has rendered many years of service in the Tamil Nadu Cadre. She was the first woman to be posted as Secretary to Governor and also the first woman posted as Secretary to Chief Minister, which she served under Dr.Selvi. J. Jayalalithaa. She has also held various portfolios as Secretary Social Welfare, Secretary Tourism, Secretary to Governor amongst others.

She now serves as a trustee of the Equitas Development Initiatives Trust, working on the CSR projects of Equitas Bank and Adviser to Saraswathi Educational Cultural and Charitable Trust.



‘They are like my own children’

As per the Indian Census 2011, over 20.42 lakh children in the 0-6 year age group are disabled. This roughly translates to one in every 100 children (in the same age group) is suffering from some type of disability. While our cities now see parents of special children approaching specialised centres and skilled professionals to assist them, what about the children from low-income families? This is exactly what got Dhanalakshmi Sattu thinking when she was working as a special educator as part of the government-led Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme (launched in the early 2000s). “I was getting a salary but I was not happy with the reach of my work. Convincing parents from disadvantaged families to send their special children to school was a challenge. I wanted to get into this full-time,” says Dhanalakshmi who went on to start the Abhaya Pradha Education Society at Nacharam in 2012.

To widen her expertise, she took up the course in NGO Management at the Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM) in 2015. “I benefited from the course in a huge manner,” she says, adding about the various things she learnt as part of the six month course. “I enhanced my communication skills and learnt how to approach people in the field. We were taught skill management and even practical subjects like account management and taxes. The team has been a part of my journey and continue to support me.” The CSIM team was invited as guests for their Annual Day 2018. Dhanalakshmi adds, “Even my batchmates visit the school and help spread the word. It is a great community!”

Early days

Having worked with families across slums in the area for many years, she says the journey hasn’t been easy. “When I started, I was saddened by the sight of many differently abled children in slums, sitting idle at home. They faced many issues - speech difficulties, behavioral issues, slow learning, etc,” says the 40-year-old. Another issue she highlights is how dealing with parents who weren’t keen to send them to ‘normal’ schools was a huge hurdle. “They were apprehensive about how they would gel with other students and most importantly, what job opportunities could they possibly have once they were done with their education,” says Dhanalakshmi. As per UNESCO, illiteracy levels are high across all categories of disability, and extremely so for children with visual, multiple and mental disabilities (and for children with severe disabilities across all the categories).

With both parents working, it is also important to note that the needs of special children are overlooked to a



great extent. Even parents need to be educated on their child’s needs, how to address them and ensure them a fun and safe childhood. And seeing these children being neglected gave her the much-needed push to start Abhaya Pradha. “I discussed my plans with my husband and he was very supportive. He works in a government company and also helps me run the school,” says Dhanalakshmi. She started off by speaking to the many families in her neighbourhood and convinced them to send their children to her school - ensuring them quality education.

Of training and funding

In its sixth year now, her school has four teachers on board. “I started with six children and now the number has risen to 50,” says an elated Dhanalakshmi. The children are in the 3-18 age group and are given speech training, written skills development and methods to improve their social and behavioral capabilities. Apart from

training children, she tells me how parental counselling is an even bigger job. “It is mandatory that one parent accompanies the child so they can learn how to engage them at home. It is helpful when parents see the work we do and how it is benefiting their child.” Dhanalakshmi is proud that seven children have moved on from her school and are now part of conventional schools.

One teacher for every five children is mandatory, she says, but funding issues are preventing her from keeping up this ratio. At present, the school is self-funded with help from family and friends. “Including rent and salaries for the teachers, I spend around Rs. 50,000-Rs. 60,000 a month. If I do get better financial assistance, I would like to bring in more specialised training for my children - tailoring, computer classes, candle making, and more. This will help

create gainful employment opportunities for them once they leave school,” she says.

Changes on-ground

Today, the parents have come a long way since when they first started. They are glad to see their children develop their speech, write a bit or even interact well in a social space. “When parents meet me, they cannot control their tears of joy. Seeing their children evolve gives them hope that they too can be integrated in a ‘normal’ school and study with other children their age,” says Dhanalakshmi, a mother of two children - a boy (in class 10) and a girl (studying in class 4).

But her journey is far from over. “I want to change the syllabus,” she says, adding, “I want to craft a separate syllabus that suits their requirements of special children. If you give these children the right attention and specific skill sets, they can be moulded into bright, financially independent individuals.” And this is her long-term aim. It is heartening to see companies and local establishments now approaching Dhanalakshmi and volunteering to employ children who leave her school. Take Hari for instance - he came in with a speech problem and after studying at Abhaya Pradha for a year, he went on to be gainfully employed as an accountant at a neighbourhood stationary shop. “It makes me very happy to see them succeed. They are like my own children and I celebrate their birthdays like I do with my own two children,” concludes Dhanalakshmi.

Leader & Leadership Matters...

16. Part 1- People Involvement : where the organization heart actually ticks



Meaning of People Involvement in Leadership:

The Leader understands each person who works with him/her, and (s)he is aware of their potential. (LOI, www.discoverself.com). People (employee) Involvement are the ways in which employees take part in making decisions, planning, making sure work is done well. The synonyms of involvement seem to be captivation, immersion and so on. The antonyms are non-engagement, non-participation and so on...



We will be a stupid company if we don't take care of our people – Swami on people (Still young still dreaming)

The attribute Involvement has both Task and People dimension embedded in it. While we had discussed Task involvement in the last article, the People involvement is taken up this time. People involvement is a lot more encompassing than mere empowerment. It is about knowing them, understanding them and finding the right job for them to ensure their development. While managing people in a small NGO or a startup itself is challenging, a large, people-intensive, services organization poses a lot greater challenge that very few Leaders have handled successfully. Shri Swaminathan tops the list. The following excerpt from a book dedicated to him on his retirement day says it all:

"Swami was born to be a leader. Throughout his career he has always led from the front and led by example. He is extraordinarily committed and focused, a very high achiever and a person who executes very well. His connect with his team is very good as he has great empathy and a keen understanding of issues. He is people centric and has always put people first... Everybody who has come in touch with him, Members of the Board, Clients, analysts, industry folks, employees, colleagues, friends etc always feel connected and comfortable and get to respect him... Swami was a great CEO..." T.V. Mohandas Pai (Chairman of Manipal Global Education; Former Director of Infosys and Head – Administration, Education and Research, Financial, Human

Resources of Infosys Leadership Institute).

Shri Swaminathan, or 'Swami' as he is lovingly addressed, is the:

- Director on Board – Tao Automation Services Pvt. Ltd; School of Inspired Leadership; Sukino Healthcare Solutions Pvt. Ltd.
- Chairman & Director on Board – Infintus Innovations Pvt. Ltd.; CLIQ Healthcare Catalysts Pvt. Ltd.
- Chairman - First Western INC. USA; Nidharshana Technologies Pvt. Ltd
- Director - Navnit Insurance Broking Pvt. Limited; KMC Specialty Hospitals (India) Ltd; Incofin India Investment Management Pvt. Ltd
- Member- Advisory Board - Indium Capital Advisors Pvt Ltd

He was formerly, Chairman - Manipal Integrated Services; Executive Chairman – Manipal Health Enterprises; Managing Director & CEO – Infosys BPO Ltd and Executive Director (Marketing) – Eicher Ltd. Swami has over 40 years of rich and varied experience in General Management, Finance & Accounting, Sales & Marketing, International Trading and Human Resources Management. Swami is a Chartered Accountant and is also an art lover. He says he would have been a musician if not in the corporate world.

Swami, it is an honour for us to have the opportunity of talking to you. What do people management or being with people as a Leader mean to you?

"Ten years ago, people asked me what the mantra of business success is. I told them, enhance the GDP of the business. For me GDP of business is G is growth; D is differentiation and P is people. I believe Growth is a no brainer. I don't see growth as a goal but as an outcome. You don't grow if you don't differentiate, and you cannot differentiate if you don't have the right people around you. To me People are the real Engines of Growth"

What do you mean by 'Right People' and 'Right attitude'?

"Two things are important - Their positive attitude to life and their willingness to learn. Skills can be taught. Right people are the people with right attitude and with the interest to learn. I believe every person can be taught. If I am able to work in teams which will have these amazingly right people I cannot but achieve. 35 to 40 years ago I was involved in fairly intense businesses. I was one of the key members responsible for setting up an automobile company in collaboration with the Japanese. No technology like today such as Cell phones, Whatsapp, Internet were available. We still set up a large company, we enjoyed what we did, we learnt a lot, we did that in record time of 2+years, and it was a fascinating experience. There were stresses but it

was the enjoyable type. I fast that forward now, and if I want to do exactly the same thing now, I will probably do it in same two + years, but I believe I would have stressed myself and also the people around me many times more. I tell myself what I achieved in two years then, I should have achieved it in half the time with a lot less stress. But, No. It's not happening. It has set me thinking why our happiness, productivity, and speed have not gone up disproportionately despite the various tools and technologies and the 24/7 connect we have today. That's where I see that it all boils down to human traits. I may sound cynical. But I debate this all the time. I believe there are a couple of personality traits in people that have intensified many times over between then and now, somewhat negatively like:

- Many of us were a lot less egoistic than what we are today
- Lot of us were a lot less greedy and focused less on accumulation
- The spirit of its my way of highway –The one-upmanship that pushes people to stay ahead of others
- I have to win at any cost. I don't know what many of our management institutes are filling into them.

Thanks to continuous evolution of HR thinking & practices, most Leaders & Managers have realized that for good and effective leadership they have to make both their subordinates and bosses look good. That leaves one set of people which is the other area of my interest for last several years! No matter which meeting, from corporate to professional forums to NGOs, by and large in the first 15 minutes of the discussion we all know the best way forward. More often than not it could take you 15 more meetings to get to the same verdict & finally the decision. Biggest cause of stress and unproductivity. If I sit back and think why this happens, I see that it is because in that meeting peers most often don't give each other any opportunity to gain

recognition by accepting their point of view as the most apt.. We always hold back from giving credit to our peers. We are so economical with praise when it comes to our peer group. I ask consultants to show me an organization or tell me how I can learn from an organization where peers can give their lives to put each other in the spotlight. The consultants invariably name a couple of charitable institutions or NGOs. I say No, I want names of businesses where money making is the primary objective but peers root for peers. You may be a great competitor but you still want your adversary to look good. To me that is winning leadership. Why can't people say good things more easily & openly and be free with praise? I think I have earned the greatest success when people feel you are not criticizing them but you are only opening up another perspective for them.

"Swami's mantra of GDP talked of Growth and Differentiation along with People in the same breath...his strong belief in People development and the focus on 3Cs of (Compensation, Career & Comfort) people ensured a greater level of involvement resulting in the organization meeting its business goals too!...his approach in providing growth opportunities for lateral and leadership positions for people from within, has differentiated us from the others in the industry...As a CEO, he ensured a healthy mix of getting his teams to focus on business results and outcomes, while he simultaneously got people to think beyond the ordinary. From an HR perspective the blend and the balance between business priorities with a people focus is what made him different..." Raghavendra K, VP and Global Head HR, Infosys BPO.

Can you share with us one moment that you cherish most in your tenure as a leader that made you feel most loved?

"When I retired, the entire Infosys BPO company, 28000 people 75 different nationalities across 18 centers

globally got together and they all put together an evening of farewell. All centers were in video conference with us. The main event was held in Infosys convention hall in the Bangalore campus. They termed the entire event as 'Still Young. Still Dreaming'. They put together testimonials from many people I have worked and spent time with. They reached out to some of my family members and ex-bosses and brought out a book. One of the most fascinating things was that they asked me to open a gift wrapped book titled 'Legends', a coffee table book on Amitabh Bachchan and they had personalized it with Amitabh signing as 'To Swami, with Love', and gave it to me. It arrived at the right time and that was my farewell gift which said it all. They also got my cousin to come for the event and had interviewed some of my old friends & colleagues across locations which they played at the event. These are moments I will cherish forever and makes working with people the ultimate experience.

Swami, as a leader how do you recognize the square plugs are put in the square holes and round plugs in round holes – the Job and person fit?

Swami replies "This is possible when you are able to relate or create events to know that person. The HR in today's corporate tells me the span of control is to be 1:25. But all my life I will never have more than 7 or 8 people reporting to me. When the team grows I will disintegrate the whole team. I will insist that those 7 or 8 people will not have more than 7 or 8 reporting to them. It doesn't matter if it is a 30,000-people or 100-people company. I believe if you take care of the top 10%, the rest will take care of the rest. For me more stars on shoulders is not indicative of great leadership. It is the quality time that you are able to spend with people that is the hall mark of good leadership.

To take care means to know them, which to me essentially boils down to three areas:

1. What is their personal aspiration?

2. What is their career aspiration?
3. Knowing a little more of their personal likes and dislikes & may be a bit of their family without being intrusive

For example, if I tell a person that I am transferring him to Timbuktu on a new project. If I didn't know what his family is like – his dad with cancer, his wife is working, and his child is 7 years old etc etc. If I knew it, I will look for an alternative or at least know that asking him will put him up in a dilemma. I will still talk to him and tell him and see how he will manage if he has to go. He will know he is not forced when I talk to him and that we are trying to co create a best possible solution from his perspective".

When I mentioned that organizations are afraid of attrition and don't wish to waste much time with people, Swami laughingly adds, "I will certainly know a lot more of these 8 or 9 people who are reporting to me, formally or informally. I will spend enough and more time. I will have a dialogue, may be know their family and the family will perhaps know me. It is a kind of a personal connect. You got to really work through it. People staying and you putting effort is like a chicken and egg story. Because you don't invest your time on him, the guy leaves. Thinking he is going to be cantankerous and therefore you don't do your thing, the guy is going to be just that. You only have yourself to blame. Leaders should pick their battle."

"Just like learning never exhausts the mind, relentless passion for people can never exhaust Swami and this completely resonates in everything you do. You have left your signature on many of Infosys BPOs firsts along with unique people initiatives that we have conceptualized and deployed in IBPO..." Dr. Archana Arcot, AVP HR Business Head, Infosys

Part 2 to be continued next month...

—Dr Kalpana Sampath



Centre for Social Initiative and Management

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

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

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

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

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

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GO INCLUSIVE, BUILD A BETTER TOMORROW

Association of People with Disabilities (APD) has impacted the lives of over 500,000 economically marginalized people with disabilities.



In the last 60 years of its existence, Bengaluru-based The Association of People with Disabilities (APD) has impacted the lives of over 500,000 economically marginalized people with disabilities. It has also influenced millions through awareness events across the country. APD follows what it calls a "life-cycle approach" to rehabilitate people with special needs.

APD intervenes into a child's life from the day of birth, conducting checks periodically to identify issues that could lead to developmental delays. Corrective action, be it medical, surgical or via orthotics and assistive technology, is taken to support the child.

More significantly, the children's caregivers are trained in early intervention. The families are given assistance to avail government schemes and any other aid required. This goes on till 6 years of age during which the child

is also exposed to early education.

Once a child develops the ability to attend school, APD helps him or her with admission to a school where teachers are trained in special education. The organisation runs its own inclusive school in Lingarajapuram, supports the creation of other inclusive schools in districts via the BOT model and facilitates model schools. It also trains teachers, sensitizes peers and other stakeholders such as government bodies, ASHA workers and Anganwadis to create an inclusive ecosystem.

As far as adults are concerned, the organization supports those in the age groups of 18 to 35 with skill development and job placement. The youth are trained in foundation life skills and communication before they move on to any domain training. APD further sensitizes employers and employees in organisations and makes

the workplace disability-friendly with accessible infrastructure.

Throughout this life-cycle approach, the service recipients and their caregivers are educated on their rights and entitlements. APD emphasises the involvement of more women with disability in all spheres of life.

Much has changed in 50 years thanks to technology, orthopaedic advancements, government schemes and policies, and the work of NGOs. The emergence of role models from sports has also shattered myth and taboo surrounding disability. International pressure through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the rise of the Disabled Peoples Movement globally and in India has also helped to address the stigma to a degree. However, the stigma associated with physical disabilities exists, more so in rural areas.

Even today, children with special needs are excluded from schools and youth are deprived of employment. Easy access to recreation, sports and luxuries for the differently-abled seem like far-fetched expectations when basic healthcare, education and livelihood are also not guaranteed.

To remove the stigma, we need education, sensitization, awareness, strong implementation of laws and policies and more disability heroes. But most of all, compassion and the belief that inclusion is a right of every human being irrespective of their physical or mental state.

To combat mindsets, APD recently established the Disability Awareness Program to positively influence and impact the attitudes and behaviour of youngsters towards the differently-abled. In the last few months, APD has sensitized around 903 10-to-17-year-old school children and 35 teachers

from over 9 schools in Bangalore such as DPS, New Baldwin School, and others on disability. The NGO conducts sensitization programs in rural communities, colleges, healthcare institutes, and corporate organisations to change people's perception of people with disability. In fact, sensitization and capacity building events are critical components of every APD program, to build an inclusive community where people with disability can thrive.

While great progress has been made on multiple fronts, the fact remains that a large percentage of the disability that exists in India is a consequence of malnutrition, lack of early healthcare facilities, lack of awareness, social stigma, the prevalence of child marriage and poverty. There's no magic wand to eradicate physical disability without fundamental changes in social practices and access to basic needs.

The government has launched schemes and the RPWD Act to support people with disability, but stronger implementation is required, especially in rural areas. That is where NGOs such as APD bridge the gap between government and service recipients.

Then there's the issue of disabilities like blood-borne disease, leprosy and Parkinson's becoming more prevalent. While polio is near eradication, these other disabilities have become common. In the RPWD Act of 2016, the list has been expanded from 7 to 21 conditions. APD sees a much higher incidence of spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy and other disabilities in the areas they serve.

The fact is that although India is in a better space than it was 20 years ago, there is still some distance to cover.

APD was founded in 1959, as a small centre on Cambridge Road, Bangalore, where training in tailoring was provided. The Community Based

Rehabilitation (CBR) model started in 1981 with a survey in Kolar Gold Fields. The Anand Ashrama centre in Chintamani became the hub of CBR activity in rural areas in 1988. In 2004, APD expanded its programmes to other districts of Karnataka. The NGO also expanded its scope beyond locomotor disability.

By 2012, it was observed that most NGOs and facilities were available in the south of Karnataka, in and around Bangalore. North Karnataka was the region with greater need. APD started its programs in the underprivileged communities in North Karnataka with its Strategic Partners program.

Under the organization's 2018-21 strategic plan, Belagavi and Kalaburagi divisions have become focus areas in Urban Bengaluru. APD's 2018-21 mission is to reach 80,000 people with disability and 1,30,000 people in general via collaborations with local government systems, institutions and

local civil society organisations.

With the establishment of the Institute of Disability, Rehabilitation and Research (IDRR), APD hopes to be recognised as a leader in the field of disability, nationally and globally. The institute works to create a human resource pool for the disability sector and fill gaps in data and research. Over a period, IDRR hopes to turn into a knowledge repository that will cater to research scholars, policy makers, and implementers. It will run at least 6 Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) accredited courses and courses linked with the core programmes of APD.

APD also plans to launch an Elderly Rehabilitation program that will provide therapy, counselling and capacity building for family and caregivers on rehabilitation management aspects, assistive and adaptive device support, and accessibility support for senior citizens.

Abled or disabled, adventure awaits

Paragliding? Mountain-biking? Scuba diving? Adventures Beyond Barriers Foundation shows that adventure is for everyone.

We've had quadriplegics who have stared at the ceiling for 15 years. Now they're doing all kinds of sport - scuba diving, marathons, having fun." – Divyanshu Ganatra, Founder, Adventures Beyond Barriers Foundation



This is the kind of world that Divyanshu Ganatra wants to nurture. Where people with disabilities (PWDs) take part in adventure sports, together with able-bodied people. A grand vision of inclusivity by someone who understands what it's like to be excluded.

As a teenager, Divyanshu and his friends used to trek across the majestic highlands of India, and partake in all manner of adventures. But when blindness struck at the age of 19 due to glaucoma, the adventures stopped for

Divyanshu. He was keen, despite not being able to see, but he was no longer being invited by his friends who didn't think it would be possible to include him in their expeditions.

India's disabled community number over 26 million people, a size greater than the population of Australia. From being excluded from activities, to not having the access to jobs despite their credentials, PWDs in India face multiple social handicaps.

"If these handicaps I face are because of the social construct of the world, then the only way to change it, is by changing

people's mindsets — by awareness, by education, by empathy," says Divyanshu.

This vision of change is what drove Divyanshu to create Adventures Beyond Barriers Foundation (ABBF), a non-profit organisation that brings able-bodied people and PWDs on adventures around the world. From scaling the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, to diving the depths of the Indian Ocean, ABBF has brought together over 5,600 people from across the world, to nurture an inclusive ideology.

"Every single employee of

Volkswagen [India] has come on treks with us — to be sensitised, to be emphatic. They started hiring people with disabilities... their policies have changed," shares an excited Divyanshu. "You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than a year of conversation."

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

Engaging with Migrant Workers

Engaging with Migrant Workers

Urbanisation has not only given birth to many new cities, but has also brought rural distress and foot loose migration to our focus. While the data from 2011 census testifies this, it also shockingly points out the lack of an institutional response to the rights and needs of migrant workers. "Migration is no longer seasonal in our country. It is circular, being characterised by the way industry recruits workers. Workers move from one city to another depending on the scope of employment and this is the form of migration more prevalent in our country now," says Ms. Amrita Sharma, Director of Aajeevika Bureau.

Acknowledging the vulnerability of migrant workers, she insists, is the first step towards an institutional response the sector needs. A state level study in Rajasthan revealed how migration, widely prevalent, was seen as a means of survival and the vulnerability of these workers being capitalised by the destination cities. Aajeevika Bureau (AB) was established in 2005, in Rajasthan, to provide the platform for a dedicated interaction with migrant workers and build an institutional voice for migrant labour in the country. AB's work began with the tribal belts in Rajasthan but the very nature of their target population required them to be available in both source and destination cities. Working across migration corridors in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra, AB's approach covers both rural and urban settlements.

Making themselves available for the migrant workers through 15 walk in resource centres in the three states, AB has designed all its services fully aware of the implications faced by work force in the informal sector. "Migrants workers are largely absorbed by the informal sector where there is hardly any proof of employment or a contract, promising certain benefits from the employer. With no entitlements guaranteed or demanded, their vulnerability is manipulated and used by contractors. In fact, this is the reason why migrant workers are preferred over locally available labour," explains Mr. Santosh Poonia, Programme Manager at AB.

AB intends to demonstrate the possibility of a holistic institutional response that not only addresses the needs of migrant workers, but also makes way for their welfare by providing lasting solutions to their economic, social and legal problems. AB offers a range of services starting from issue of identity cards, legal aid services to bring back stolen wages, emergency response to hazards on work sites, connecting workers with social security schemes, etc. The Legal Aid cell has registered 12,429 labour dispute cases and wage repayment of 17.18 crore rupees has been facilitated. AB's Labour Helpline is a huge success and has been taken over by the Government



of Rajasthan to be able to intervene directly where needed. Also, the identity cards provided by AB have been ratified by the Government of Rajasthan, allowing the workers to access a range of government services through the same. Over one lakh migrant workers have been registered with government photo identity cards in Rajasthan.

While workers were focussed on source and destination areas, AB also began to look at the dependents left back home by these workers. "While men migrated in search of work opportunities, women, children back home struggled to claim their entitlements in the absence of male members. They had to be educated about their entitlements and other social welfare programmes like Public Distribution System, Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), National

Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGA), admission in government schools, etc. AB stepped in as this was an integral part of their approach," says Amrita. So far, 12000 women have been mobilised and with their support, 8500 families have been linked to NREGA, 10000 families have been linked to PDS entitlements.

The most significant of AB's contribution to this sector, she feels, has been the shift in perception surrounding migration - from that of a negative phenomenon to a valid livelihood strategy that needs to be acknowledged. "If we do not acknowledge and engage with them, the large work force that is invisible, will never be brought to light," she warns.

AB and team have successfully influenced donor priorities as well, encouraging them to build portfolios to support the issue. Incubation support is also provided to interested NGOs to scale the model. AB has a dedicated research team that has been gathering

evidence from all its interventions to show the potential for replication in other parts of the country. AB has helped more than 30 organisations across 10 states in India set up their migration programmes.

Their expertise has also guided state and central government institutions set up migration support centres. Their publications have helped mainstream the concerns of migrant workers across the country. AB published the first of its kind state migration profiles for Rajasthan and Odisha, now being widely used for policy advocacy in these states.

Urbanisation and migration are processes that feed each other, with industry being an important player in these processes. A multifaceted engagement with government departments and industry is essential to ensure that workers behind these developments live a dignified life, with complete access to all their entitlements and that their work is valued. AB's model has demonstrated the potential of a systematic response and will go on to lead the way in mainstreaming concerns of women migrant workers as well. "We are now trying to reach out to adolescent girls and protect them from sexual harassment and gender bias in wage distribution. It has been a long road and very challenging to work with a population whose essential characteristic is to move. We have not surpassed all the challenges, yet we grow day by day, learning from our work," smiles Amrita.

—Shanmuga Priya.T

Conversations with Shri Ramana Maharishi

A Cochin Brahmin, Professor in the Ernakulam College, had an interesting conversation with Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan advised surrender to God. The visitor gave a glimpse of an ICS Officer. The gentleman while a student was an atheist or an agnostic. He is very pious now and the change has surprised everyone who had known him before.

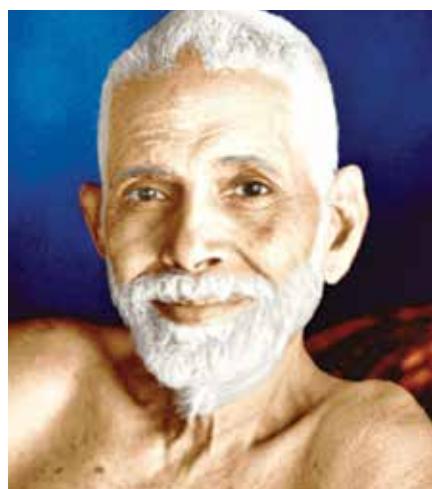
In further conversation, the following points were noteworthy - The visitor said: "One must become satiate with the fulfilment of desires before they are renounced." Sri Bhagavan smiled and cut in: "Fire might as well be put out by pouring spirit over the flames.

(All laugh).

The more the desires are fulfilled, the deeper grows the *samskara*. They must become weaker before they cease to assert themselves. That weakness is brought about by restraining oneself and not by losing oneself in desires.

D.: How can they be rendered weaker?

M.: By knowledge. You know that you are not the mind. The desires are in the mind. Such knowledge helps one to



control them.

D.: But they are not controlled in our practical lives.

M.: Every time you attempt satisfaction of a desire the knowledge comes that it is better to desist. Repeated reminders of this kind will in due course weaken the desires. What is your true nature? How can you ever forget it? Waking, dream and sleep are mere phases of the mind. They are not of the Self. You are the witness of these states. Your true nature is found in sleep.

D.: But we are advised not to fall into sleep during meditation.

M.: That is stupor you must guard against. That sleep which alternates with waking is not true sleep. That waking which alternates with sleep is not true waking. Are you now awake? You are not. You are required to wake up to your real state. You should not fall into false sleep nor keep falsely awake. Hence: *Laye sambodhayeccittam vikshiptam samayet punah.*

What does it mean? It means that you should not fall into any one of these states but remain amidst them in your true unsullied nature.

D.: The states are of our mind only.

M.: Whose mind? Hold it and see.

D.: The mind cannot be held. It is that which creates all these. It is known only by its effects and not in its true nature.

M.: Quite so. You see the colours of the spectrum. Together they form the white light. But seven colours are seen through the prism. Similarly, the one Self resolves itself into so many phases, mind, world, body, etc. The Self is seen as the mind, the body or the world. That

is to say, it becomes whatever you perceive it to be.

D.: These are difficult to follow in practice. I will hold on to God and surrender.

M.: That is the best.

D.: How can I do my duties without attachment? There is my wife, there are my children. I must do my duty towards them. Affection is necessary. Am I right?

M.: How do you do your work in the College?

D.: (laughing) For wages.

M.: Not because you are attached, simply as doing your duty.

D.: But my pupils expect me to love them.

M.: "Detachment in the interior and attachment in appearance," says Yoga Vasishta.

—Source: Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi



Listening



When Calvin Coolidge was President of the United States, he saw dozens of people each day. Most had complaints of one kind or the other.

One day a visiting Governor told the President that he did not understand how he was able to meet so many people in the space of a few hours. "While, you are finished with all your visitors by dinner time," said the Governor "I am often in my office till midnight."

"Yes" said Coolidge. "That's because you talk."

Explicit Learning

- For effective listening you need a free mind.
- Sometimes sheer listening completes a conversation.
- A break in communication starts when we tend to think of what to talk next rather than just listen.

Introspective Learning

- What prevents me from listening?
- What is the nature of 'Listening'?
- How do I develop my ability to listen?

A PROBLEM SHARED IS A PROBLEM HALVED

“There are always two people in every picture, the photographer and the viewer” Ansel Adams.

At Give2Gain, in Stockport, we offer a range of networking meetings and workshops that promote local cross sector relationship building. We are big fans of the stakeholder experience. As we account for the social good we believe we provide, the process is brought alive by the role our stakeholders play in exploring information and testing assumptions.

Our Everyday Work supports people from local corporate and enterprise businesses to make connections. We find that whenever we bring people together, they bring with them a wealth of values, perspectives, ideas, assumptions and expectations. We help them navigate through this diversity, of their view of the world, to arrive at a mutually supportive helping relationship that in turn enables them to work together to help each other and other local people; the outcome of this is local social good.

Our Working Principles are rooted in the knowledge that local corporate and enterprise businesses are run by and employ local people and the belief that everyone has experience, knowledge and skills that can be used to help others. This is underpinned by our values of:

- sharing information, time & resources;
- enabling people to do it themselves and
- relationship building across local business and enterprise.

Our local stakeholder experiences and contributions helps us to articulate the value that our local cross sector work creates. In our view, social accounting must include knowing and understanding the perspectives of stakeholders, but how do we do this and how is this used in our social accounts?

We do this through what we call, Community Conversations which is about talking with our stakeholders and listening to their views. We like the conversational approach because it enables everyone to share ideas and learn from each other. People taking part tell us that they make lots of connections, meet new people and end up having conversations they never expected to have.

An additional outcome of our community conversations is the recognition of and challenge to various assumptions and expectations that we all hold. We think it is particularly important to bring these into the conversations so that people have an opportunity to explore their beliefs and perspectives and relate them to the importance to them.



Making Sense of Information Provided is rooted in following the principles of Pollner [1] who, along with his sociology colleagues, firmly believed that we are all sociologists able to navigate through our lives by analysing and making sense of information along the way. Pollner observed members of the public in the American traffic courts.

He found that when a person has been summoned to appear in court about a traffic fine, they would often visit the public gallery before their court appearance. Here they would work out what they needed to do to try to get the fine removed or reduced.

They observed what people did, how they dressed, how they stood, how they spoke, what they said and how they said it, and how all of this contributed to how the fine was managed by the court.

Pollner found that people recognised that certain behaviours, speech, dress and attitude reduced or removed the fine and so copied these when it was their turn to appear in court. In effect they were making sense of patterns of behaviour, within a given context, something that we all do in our everyday lives in numerous situations.

Applying this in Practice means that our analysis begins during stakeholder feedback in our community conversations. We test our understanding of what stakeholders are saying by seeking clarification of what they have said. A group of us, including some stakeholders, then get together to check the notes from the conversations and the resulting analysis report is sent to everyone for final confirmation. Sometimes we might hold another community conversation to refine our analysis.

When we get confirmation that our stakeholders recognise our analysis of their perspectives, we know we are on the right track. This process is not an academic analysis, but rather a level of recognition, through our stakeholders of what we are doing, the why, the how and the result of our actions.

This allows us to collectively recognise and record what is going well, what could be improved and what has happened that we did not expect, both positive and negative. From all of this we can work with stakeholders to modify our objectives, activities and plans and move forward to the next stage of our social accounting work.

Give2Gain recognizes the importance of stakeholder involvement in the social accounting process. Stakeholders help us understand their perspectives of our everyday work. The feedback from them can then be woven into our social accounts.

We believe that stakeholders are a barometer of what we do and that developing a social accountability relationship with them enables us all to confidently account for local social good.

Involving and working with stakeholders is so much more than getting feedback. It is about the energy and momentum that is created through sharing and understanding different perspectives. Ultimately, it is a great way of working with local people who are touched in some way by the work that we do.

–Dr. Lynn Sbaih
Director
Give2Gain CIC

“If CSR projects focus more on the agriculture sector, it would mitigate the distress of farmers.”

Shri Gagandeep Singh Bedi IAS shares with Marie Banu how Government and NGOs can work together for agricultural development.

Shri Gagandeep Singh Bedi IAS studied B.E. (Electronics and Electrical Communication) and joined as a lecturer in Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala in 1989. In 1991, he was selected for Indian Engineering Services and got a posting in Indian Railways. In 1993, he was selected in the IAS and was allotted Tamil Nadu Cadre.

He is presently the Agricultural Production Commissioner and Principal Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu. He has held many prominent positions like District Collector of Kanyakumari and District Collector of Cuddalore. He also served as Commissioner of Madurai Corporation, Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board, Chennai, Secretary of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department, Revenue and Rural Development. He is known as Collector of Heroes for his hands-on leadership in crisis situations and was awarded NDTV Officer of the Year award for his handling of floods in 2015 in Cuddalore.

In an exclusive interview, Shri Gagandeep Singh Bedi shares with Marie Banu how Government and NGOs can work together for agricultural development.

You are known as the Crises Manager par excellence. Can you please share your experience managing the tsunami programme?

I was with my family at Hotel Tamil Nadu in Mahabalipuram, and we were in knee deep waters when the tsunami struck. The first scene I witnessed, when I returned to Cuddalore, was a large number of dead bodies—mostly women and children—lying in a government hospital. This really moved me! So, anybody else telling me to tackle the situation was secondary. The will and the inner urge to do something which can help these people was my only motivation to do my best.

I kept moving from Cuddalore to Cuddalore OT (the part where fishermen lived) and then to the villages—Samiyarpettai, Parangipettai, and Killai. I did not sleep until I organized identification and burial of the people who lost their lives in the disaster. It was a devastating scenario.

At first, it was not sure whether the fishermen community in Cuddalore would go for cremation or a mass burial as they were mostly Hindus. I convened a meeting with the fishermen leaders at my Taluk office to discuss this issue. I asked them to decide on whatever they felt best, and they finally wanted to go

for mass burials which was done in such extraordinary situations by them. The District Administration gave them all support in this regard.

Was the coordination between Government and NGOs effective in tsunami rehabilitation programme?

I would like to say that NGOs played a very important role in disaster recovery and rehabilitation process in the tsunami programme. Of course, at that point of time, there were only one or two NGOs in Cuddalore that were addressing the local issues. Therefore, in the first three days, it was mostly the Government that was coordinating rescue of the injured, hospitalization, clearing of the debris, arranging for mass burial, and conducting relief camps. However, after the news spread across the world, there were many Indian NGOs as well as International NGOs who came forward in a big way to help the affected people get back to the path of recovery.

I always ensured that the government and the NGOs worked on a common platform. From January 2005 to 2007, on every Monday afternoon, I conducted regular review meetings with the Government officials and the NGOs. I delineated the NGO's area of operation based on their capability so that there were no duplication of efforts or clash of interests. I also shared with the government officials what was expected from the NGOs.

It was an excellent arrangement as the government officers/engineers reviewed the work done by NGOs and shared their feedback as well as the best practices across the table.

Do you think that the NGOs can also add value to the Agricultural sector?

There are a lot of NGOs and volunteers who have experience in the social sector. But, they need funds for sustenance. Unlike the disaster scenario, funds are scarce for developmental projects. Moreover, there are very few NGOs who focus in the agricultural sector.

In case of Tamil Nadu, it is a water starved state and also affected by recurring cyclones and floods. Until three years ago, we had only seven to eight lakh farmers covered in this scheme. We took a lot of efforts after the launch of the Prime Minister crop insurance scheme and I personally followed it up every week, like I did for the tsunami programme.

Today, we have 23 lakh farmers covered under the crop insurance scheme, which is a three-fold increase. I want this number to further go up and

that we should benefit a minimum of 40 lakh farmers. Earlier compensation for farmers who were affected by disaster never exceeded Rs. 800 to 900 crore in a year. But, for the last two years, the crop compensation that has been provided to the farmers has exceeded 5,200 crores in total. If there are more NGOs working in this area, I am sure that more farmers would be motivated to be part of this scheme.

We also need NGOs to motivate farmers to go for drip irrigation. Our government provides 100 percent subsidy for drip irrigation and our officers meet the farmers regularly to encourage them to use this technique. We used to have Rs. 70 to 80 crore rupees worth drip irrigation works earlier, and now it has increased to close to Rs. 700 crore rupees. If we have the support of NGOs, I am sure we will be able to double this reach.

Isn't it time we encourage Corporates to focus on agricultural projects for CSR?

It is a very good suggestion! If CSR projects focus more in the agriculture sector, it would mitigate the distress of farmers.

Some NGOs who have CSR funds are mobilizing farmers, creating awareness on crop insurance, and guiding farmers on pests and other diseases that might affect their crops. To name a few, MSSRF, Dhan Foundation, and Srinivasan Services Trust are doing very good work and we coordinate with them.

We would like more Corporate Houses and NGOs to come forward and be part of our governmental efforts in improving the lives of farmers.

What are the government's plans to ensure agricultural production in a sustainable manner?

With the present drought condition in Tamil Nadu, the total area that is irrigated by bore wells and open wells is 17.5 lakh hectares. Out of this, the area under drip irrigation is only

4.5 lakh hectares. We have a huge gap that needs to be covered.

Secondly, the farmers should also bring in a change in their agronomical practices. Farmers still engage in cultivation of water guzzling crops like paddy, banana, sugarcane, etc. Whereas in dry areas, they can cultivate pulses, millets and cotton which consume lesser water.

We are campaigning in Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga district. We are also encouraging the concept of collective farming where small and marginal farmers can come together, collectively bargain for agricultural inputs like fertilisers, and share the water resources in the drought scenario. The intention is to engage farmers in dry areas to engage in agriculture and sustain their livelihood.

In Tamil Nadu we have been successful, and we are forming Farmers Producer Groups with 100 farmers in each group and ensure that they are engaging in collective efforts. If they are found to be successful, the government offers them an assistance worth five lakh rupees with which they can procure common machinery like tractors, power tillers and jointly use.

Another farming technique that is being encouraged is the Integrated Farming System. Usually, farmers engage in mono-cropping, however now we are encouraging them to have a portion of agriculture, horticulture, kitchen shed, farm pond (where he stores the rain water), and also animals in his or her farm so that they have a sustainable income. The Tamil Nadu Government

has allocated 100 crore rupees for Integrated Farming System and we will like NGOs and organizations to assist us in motivating the farmers to change their mind sets and engage in such practices.



Photo: Marie Banu