

## INDIA NEEDS SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

**We all must try and strengthen the hands of Social entrepreneurs in whatever way we can**



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**A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR** is a person who pursues novel ideas into application that have the potential to solve community-based problems. These people are willing to take on the risk and the effort to create positive changes in the society through their initiatives.



Adam Smith, the economist explained in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776). "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest." He believed when individual pursued their own best interests, they would be guided towards decision that benefited other. The baker, for example, wants to earn a living to support his family. To accomplish this, he produces a product, i.e., bread, which feeds and nourishes hundreds of people. The farmer grows grain and vegetation, feeds the nation, but earns a living through it.

As a growing economy, India today needs many social entrepreneurs. We need a revolution from people of different walks of life in creating and implementing effective, innovative and sustainable solutions to battle social and environment challenges. These solutions include services and product for profit or as non-profit initiatives. India needs numerous social entrepreneurs with innovative solutions to the society's most pressing social problems in the areas of sanitation, education, water conservation, gender bias primary health, female foeticide, carbon emissions and other environmental problems. These problems are persistent in nature and need urgent resolutions.

Usually, people leave the societal needs to the government or the business sectors. Nevertheless, social entrepreneurs tend to identify areas that are not working efficiently in the current system and try to solve the problem by changing it, spreading the awareness about the solution, and influence people to be part of the change. Let's take the example of Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy's Aravind Eye Hospitals. Its business model is highly social, yet sustainable. It runs on its own revenue. The founder's mission was to eradicate blindness amongst the poor in India, especially in rural India living with a minimum daily wage and who can't afford medical treatment. Aravind Eye Hospital provides large-volume, high-quality and affordable care. In fact, 50% of its patients receive services either free or at steeply subsidized rates, yet the organization remains financially self-sustainable. Much importance is given to equity-ensuring that all patients are accorded the same high-quality care and service, regardless of their economic status. The model's core is economies of scale.

Shirish Apte has successfully rejuvenated a traditional water system in Maharashtra that is caught between the Malguzars (the local zamindars, or landlords) and the state government; the Malguzari tanks were left to die many years ago. Apte decided to change the situation and, since 2008, he has been successfully rejuvenating these tanks. His efforts and hard work have made the district administration restore 21 more such tanks. This project has helped many local people get employment, the irrigation output has increased in the area, farmers have reduced the usage of fertilizers in the farms and, above all you now get to witness a great sight as many animals come and quench their thirst at these tanks.

A social entrepreneur might also seek to address imbalance in such availability, the root causes behind such social problem, or the social stigma associated with lower castes and poverty. The main goal of be social entrepreneur is not to earn a profit, but rather to implement widespread improvements in the society.

Oddoor farms near Mangalore, Karnataka, provides an inspiring example of the efforts made by Rajesh Naik to transform 120 acres of barren land into a lush green farm through his persistent efforts of creating a 2-acre wide and 50-foot deep lake, which has not only transformed the surrounding area, but has also helped in improving the water table in the surrounding villages, besides helping in the development of a self-sufficient organic farm and a dairy. It took a

lot of financial resources and time to create a lake that gradually started filling up with water, and now it generate around 40,000 litres of water that is used for irrigating the whole farm. This has not only helped in creating and developing greenery in the area, but has also helped in increasing the water table in the surrounding areas of the farm.

Contemporary economist and management writers like Jean-Baptiste Say, Joseph Schumpeter, Peter Drucker and Howard Stevenson have defined entrepreneurship with slight variance but the same perspective that entrepreneurs are individuals who create value, those who are innovators, those who are change agents in the society, etc. Social entrepreneurs are close to all these definitions created by various economists. The only different being that of a social entrepreneur is entrepreneurs with a 'social mission'; for a social entrepreneur, social mission is explicit and central theme. This affects how they perceive and assess opportunities.

In India, social entrepreneurs face same critical problems such as enterprises need a strong, grounded business plan to help achieve milestone. The rigor of building and following a plan that is based on market realities and customer insight is critical, they need support of lawyers, chartered accountants, senior entrepreneurs to help them develop a good business plan. We have all heard of a great social enterprise doing good work, but limited to specific geographies. The primary reason they are not able to scale up is lack of funds or the founders limited hand width. I appeal to the readers of this article to strengthen the hands of social entrepreneurs in whatever way they can.

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