

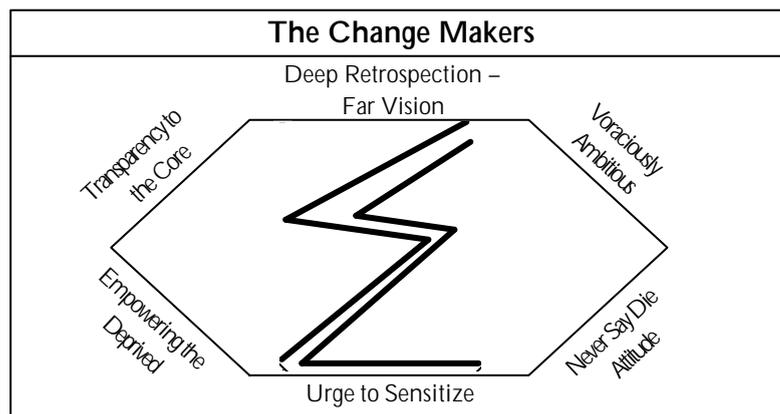
The Change Makers

As someone rightly said 'Change is the only constant thing in life.' That suggests a reactive gesture of the people towards Change. However, when it comes to Social Entrepreneurs, probably change is the only reason for their existence. They are proactive towards change. They are on a constant hunt to create a scope for change and thus bring about change in the society. This is where Social Entrepreneurs differ from others with regard to change. This chapter examines the same.

'**C**hange' has a different connotation for the Social Entrepreneurs as compared to its understanding by their business counterparts. Business entrepreneurs manage change. Social Entrepreneurs create change. Business entrepreneurs push change; Social Entrepreneurs drive change. The managers are trained to manage change when the organization ought to respond to certain organization, industry and economic related changes. Social Entrepreneurs are tuned to uncover the social issues, bring the problems into light, bring about awareness among the affected, and initiate change proactively for social cause. While business entrepreneurs create businesses, Social Entrepreneurs create change for social cause.

Bill Drayton while talking about Social Entrepreneurs says “Having decided that the world must change in some important way, they simply find and build highways that lead inexorably to the desired result. Where others see barriers, they delight in finding solutions and in turning them into society’s new and concrete patterns” (Source: Policy Innovations). The definition by Bill Drayton highlights that Social Entrepreneurs don’t wait for surroundings to decide the time for change; instead they proactively wake up the society and make them realize the need for change and thus facilitate the change.

Social Entrepreneurs are the transformative forces with new ideas addressing major social problems. They are the change makers in their relentless pursuit of effective and sustainable solutions to the problems faced by the deprived sections of the society. Passion for change is in the blood and veins of Social Entrepreneurs, with no record of giving up before the desired change is brought about and sustainability is ensured. While writing this book, we talked to several Social Entrepreneurs who shared their journey towards the social development. Their narrations in addition to our secondary information, about Social Entrepreneurs, suggested that their change making process revolves around a few vital principles. These principles drive the change and make the transformation happen.



Deep Retrospection – Far Vision

Most of the issues raised by Social Entrepreneurs are based on the very fundamental observations, which are supported by deep retrospective analysis, on the basis of which, they lay an indomitable vision to bring about a change. One such is the issue raised by Ashraf Patel of Pravah – *Smiles*. Ashraf observed and realized that historically, India's leaders and administrators have come from urban elite schools and educational institutions. However, these learning institutions have missed the attention to provide an intellectual and values framework for students that helps them cope with the myriad tensions of the country or help lessen cultural and other social factors (Courtesy: www.ashoka.org). With this observation, Ashraf and associates founded Pravah, which offers students a curriculum that, for the first time, looks beyond a prescribed syllabus and initiates youth to practical decision-making within a complex context of social problems. Pravaha's vision is to create a new generation of receptive, knowledgeable, and responsible decision-makers. Ashraf says, "We feel that we must instill awareness and sensitivity towards societal issues among the young individuals who will be the decision-makers and leaders of the future" (www.ashoka.org).

Ashraf's endeavor has proved to be significant, as it has started transforming the scenario at its scale of operations. Referring to her first breakthrough she says "I think the first high point was doing the first workshop where we all got together, basically all of the original founders. All of us came together in the beginning and it was decided to do this workshop. The workshop went on very well after the initial days of incubation. Today Pravah is a matured organization spearheading the call for a change at the root level, by imparting the social awareness at the schooling level. Today the team of Pravah, has gone beyond founders, in terms of the skills, the facilitation to the target audience, and the vision to bring about change at the root

level of the society. A few other things where Pravah has turned the tables are its association with CBSE". Ashraf says, "Couple of other developments to say are, we are now in places where we will be able to engage effectively with the educational institutions, CBSE has called us to participate in curriculum development. Now after more than 10 years Pravah is in a space where it can influence a larger system".

Voraciously Ambitious

Social Entrepreneurs are insatiably ambitious by nature. Their ambitions certainly sound to be unachievable, however, they are also hell-bent on translating the ambition into reality. They are by nature sensitive towards the societal sufferings. And hence do not hesitate in assuming the leadership to take on the society related issues. Swanchetan by Dr. Rajat Mitra is one such endeavor, which started with an indomitable ambition to bring in place the rights for victims of crimes, by institutionalizing the concept of victimology. Dr. Rajat Mitra is poised to bring in tectonic changes in the criminal justice machinery in India by institutionalizing the concept of victimology. He aims to establish both legal recognition of victims' rights and to develop standard services to promote emotional health and physical recovery of victims who suffer psychological trauma. (www.ashoka.org).

Swanchetan, under the leadership of Dr. Mitra, works with police departments and other associated bodies of the justice system. As part of the transformation, Dr. Mitra aims to change the attitudes and actions of those in authority. Dr. Mitra's efforts are directed towards questioning and redefining the traditional methods that will create new amicable policies to safeguard the rights of victims. Dr. Mitra has brought about significant changes in the state of Delhi and in the vicinity. While sharing those achievements Dr. Mitra says "I think one was the Delhi police passing a standing order 303. This talks

about our role and making it mandatory for all the police stations to refer all cases of counseling to us. This came around 4 years back and after intense hard work. That was a very proud moment for our whole team when we achieved this.” This achievement in the words of Dr. Mitra stands as a model for Government-NGO collaboration. Further even the US embassy got interested in Dr. Mitra’s efforts. In addition, Swanchetan also held a workshop in Eastern Europe and it was translated into Russian. Not only this but Swanchetan is also standing as a benchmark for other NGOs, which started coming to Dr. Mitra for collaboration with government.

Never Say Die Attitude

Social Entrepreneurs are addicted to change equipped with a never-say-die attitude. They are resolute on improving the lives, facilitating the deprived and minimizing the gap between the haves and have-nots. They are not bogged down by any impediments blocking their way. They start with an intention to change and they conclude with the incorporation of the change. Javed Abidi’s endeavor for upliftment of the disabled proves the same.

Javed Abidi – an Ashoka certified Social Entrepreneur, is affected with a spinal malady and is unfortunately confined to the wheelchair for life. However, he never allowed his misfortunes to affect him adversely, instead he decided to provide political visibility and economic opportunities for disabled persons.

Javed played an instrumental role in introducing cross-disability culture in the country. This has been vital for getting groups dealing with physical and mental disabilities to learn of, and listen to, each other. Thus Javed is carrying out nationwide surveys and researches. This endeavor is first of its kind in the history of the movement – the results have exposed precarious state of the disabled. However, Javed Abidi’s arduous and undaunted efforts have drawn attention of the

concerned authorities towards the challenged community. The first successful change that Javed had brought in place was the passage of law. Javed while narrating the maiden success in his words says, “When I joined the disability movement in 1992, there was absolute darkness and very disturbing. In 3 years time we were able to convince the government to draft the law. We entered the phase two of the movement. One of those very inspiring moments has been the inclusion of disability in the census of 2001. The visit of Steven Hawking which gave us a huge platform for fighting for access when we need the wrap over of government of India and forced them to make those wooden ramps at redfort and qutub minar (New Delhi) for the electronic wheel chairs.”

That is very inspiring. Nevertheless, Javed Abidi did not stop there. Then he took on ‘access to election’. Franchising vote is a fundamental right and Javed’s concern was “if you want the disabled to realize their political rights and to become active in the political process, then the election process should be accessible to”. And much to his surprise the election commission was not very willing to include the disabled, actively in the voting process. Javed initiated a movement and asked for ramps to be put up at all polling booths to facilitate the physically challenged to exercise the vote.

Another debate in this respect is the introduction of EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines). Javed’s argument was how would a blind person know which button to press. Javed had to put his shoulders into wheel, in order to facilitate the physically challenged franchise their vote and blind cast their vote through a compatible EVM designed keeping the blind under consideration.

Finally, his fight fructified when the apex court supported Javed’s appeal and brought in place the temporary wooden ramps at the voting booth. And the EVM has been instructed to be made accessible to the visually challenged too.

Not limiting his endeavors to this, he also took on the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission). As a result of which, the notification of this year 2006, suggests some 17 posts (as Civil Services) open to the disabled. Javed's joy knew no bounds when he was saying, "I am very happy to tell you that last year 2005, a blind person has got selected to the IAS (Indian Administrative Services). These are paradigm shifts the Social Entrepreneurs are known to bring about". While sharing his efforts to bring in more paradigm shifts Javed says "I am so excited by this one development (disabled being inducted into the civil services), because I know the system and I know it is going to have a huge impact in several ways. One, disabled person being in the civil services will make other officers more aware about disability issues, and hopefully they will not make the same insensitive bureaucrats that we have today. Second, in 5 years from now, we are going to have around 60 vacancies reserved for the disabled in civil services and we have plans to double this in 10 years". Jubilant Javed says, "Can you imagine the impact of that. The day is not very far away when they will have unions of their own and they will in fact ask for their rights, that they will in fact start asking questions as to why is this not happening etc. Ultimately they (the physically challenged) are going to be the policy makers the decision makers of tomorrow. Another thing, which excites me is when these boys and girls actually get posted as administrators the impact it is going to have on the psyche of India. When a villager or an ordinary person from a district/village goes and sees that the collector is blind or the collector is in the wheelchair, it is obviously going to have a huge positive impact on the psyche on India. And if that villager has a disabled child, these developments will certainly boost his confidence."

Urge to Sensitize

One of the vital drivers of the change that propels the Social Entrepreneurs is their *urge to sensitize* the society towards apparently

trivial issues that may in fact, bring-about a sea change in the society. Social Entrepreneurs have the knack of identifying those areas, which can be optimized by sensitizing the society towards those areas. Anshu K Gupta of Goonj observes, "The urban population is a little insensitive towards the precarious state of the poor. And no denying the fact there is a great divide between the rich and the poor."

Anshu K Gupta acts an effective catalyst and facilitates in bridging the gap between urban riches and rural deprived. His unique strategy is to sensitize the urban riches, of the growing divide between the rich and the poor and motivate them to optimise the use of those belongings, which they otherwise would want to get rid of. Anshu is establishing a culture of sustained donations in India by creating a mechanism for second-hand clothes and goods to pass from the wealthy to the poor (www.ashoka.org).

Anshu while explaining his initiative says, "this (Goonj) is an opportunity for many people to get rid of the material which they don't want. It is also an opportunity to those well-educated, people with a philanthropic bent, but do not convert these intentions into good cause for some constraints. Which is why we sensitize urban people in all kind of forums, lectures we organize in the weekend in the residential areas. We really go and tell this is what we require and this is what we don't". As a result, Anshu shares with pride "we do get a lot of good material. Whenever there is a disaster people straightly come and give whatever they can."

Empowering the Deprived

Empowerment is one of the chief tenets of a Social Entrepreneur. Social Entrepreneur leads in a democratic style with a genuine concern for the development of the under privileged society. Anil Shaligram of "One Village One Computer" (1V1C) is in principle involved in empowering villagers by equipping them with the basics of information technology and providing them the exposure.

Through his initiative, Anil Shaligram is making information technology accessible to rural communities in India by teaching the underprivileged to use computers to tackle basic social and economic problems. Anil also facilitates setting up a network of locally run IT cooperatives. Villagers have used their new skill sets to address the severe issues like scarcity of water, unemployment, and education, where his train-and-empower strategies are making inroads nationwide (www.ashoka.org). Their target audience was largely women. While sharing a couple of his projects as a part of OV1C model, he says, "Training women was very good experience. We went to Wardha district of Maharashtra. That place was declared as anti-liquor district. But we found liquor on a large scale and there was lot of struggle against that. So we had a camp with women who were active in pursuing the fight against liquor. There were some 60 women. We taught them to use computer in their anti-liquor struggle. In another experience we taught illiterate women of another backward district of Maharashtra – Parbani. There are women scavengers working in a small corporation who were totally illiterate. The women in the villages face lot of problems like not getting payment, accidents yielding no compensation or medical aid. They were very downtrodden women. There are 30 women whom we taught IT. As a result, they could put their problems through IT finally in Bombay. They got enthused and then they started mobilizing other women. They mobilized some 700 women from Manwad (Parbani). That shows how the genuine spirit of a Social Entrepreneur is bringing about a sea change in the attitudes of the underprivileged community by empowering them".

Transparency to the Core

Another pivotal principle of Social Entrepreneurs that drives change in the social sector is their obsession with transparency. Social Entrepreneurs are wedded to ethics. Transparency being one of the chief tenets, defines their ethical values. Arvind Kejriwal of Parivartan,

the Magsaysay award recipient has proved the power of transparency through his campaign for *Right To Information Act*. Arvind Kejriwal uses the new state law (Right to Information) to fight corruption in India, by training ordinary citizens to secure transparency and accountability at all levels of government (www.ashoka.org).

While talking about his success so far at Parivartan, Arvind says “I would say several things but the most notable achievement is our experiments on how a common man can actually use Right to Information, and be able to directly address these issues. These experiments have been quite successful. They have been very satisfying when we guided individuals. They fought it on their own. For instance, a few of our trainees – Dhanno, a village woman got her ration card without paying bribe, which otherwise is very unusual in villages; Triveni – a poor woman also got her ration card through RTI act. There are 100s of such successful examples. Hence, RTI motivates how individuals can use and make a difference in the society. This is one area where we have been quite successful. Second is PDS (Public Distribution System). As a part of our initiative, we examined the records of distribution system. And once that was obtained and corruption was exposed and the government was forced to make systemic changes.

The awareness of rights and privileges is very low, which stands as the biggest challenge today. We have to spread the awareness on a very aggressive scale. There we have been successful in getting the mainstream media involved. Very recently, there have been a drive campaign in the media. We have been successful in getting the media involved.” That is how Arvind Kejriwal, an ex-civil servant is using the principle called transparency and the weapon called Right to Information, and bringing significant changes at the grassroots.

As said, the above change is the only reason of the very existence of Social Entrepreneurs. They not only look at this as the only constant thing, but probably only vehicle to improve the lives of the deprived. And hence, they assume the incarnation of the change drivers in the society.

At a glance...

- The leader should adhere to systemic thinking and foster collaborative culture.
- '*Change*' has a different connotation for Social Entrepreneurs as compared to its understanding by their business counterparts.
- Social Entrepreneurs are the transformative forces with new ideas addressing major social problems. They are the change makers in the relentless pursuit of effective and sustainable solutions to problems faced by the deprived section of the society.
- Most of the issues raised by the Social Entrepreneurs are based on the very fundamental observation, which are supported by deep retrospective analysis and a farsighted vision.
- Social Entrepreneurs ambitions certainly sound to be unachievable, however, they are also hell-bent on translating the ambitious dream into reality.
- One of the vital drivers of change that propels Social Entrepreneurs is their *urge to sensitize* the society towards apparently trivial issues that may actually bring-about a sea change in the society.
- Social Entrepreneurs are addicted to change equipped with a never-say-die attitude.
- Social Entrepreneur leads in a democratic style with a genuine concern for the development of the underprivileged society by empowering them to the core.
- Social Entrepreneurs are obsessed with transparency and accountability.

