



THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS



Wednesday, May, 02, 2018 05:22:17 PM




Home > Magazine

Sultans of Skill

A host of social entrepreneurs is empowering have-nots across the country with jobs and making them employable by Sunita Raghu and Sujitha J.



Published: 18th November 2017 10:00 PM | Last Updated: 18th November 2017 03:53 PM

 | A+ A A-



shekhar yadav/Pawan Sharma & Ayush Agarwal (right)

By Sunita Raghu and Sujitha J

India is poised for an unprecedented transformation in the coming decade. Going by the report of the National Higher Education Commission, it seems there never was a better time to skill the country. The findings of the report put the average age of the Indian population as 29 years in 2020 compared to 40 years in the US, 46 years in Europe and 47 years in Japan—outpacing China as the country with the largest tertiary-age population. With so many young Indian men and women scouting for jobs and industries complaining of appropriately skilled manpower, it warrants a paradox. Fortunately, 28-year-old Kamali who works as a team lead at a call centre at Kollumangudi village in Tiruvarur, Tamil Nadu, has steered clear of this conundrum.

With her father being unwell, her earnings have bolstered the family's finances. That's all thanks to the start-up Desicrew which harnesses professional talent in non-urban areas. Like Kamali, Mumbai resident Ove's life has changed for the better after he got trained as a tour guide with a start-up, Be the Local Tours and Travels.



In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the Skill India campaign to train over 40 crore people by 2022. As if in answer to the government sounding the bugle of change, start-ups have emerged as the answer to India's skilling needs. For every start-up that went bust, there are several others that have fast-tracked their way to unimaginable success.

In this kind of a milieu, there are others whose main aim is to fulfil a particular need—working within the society for the society. It could be imparting a particular skill or service so as to empower the have-nots with jobs and livelihoods, thus ensuring that they stand on their own feet. Sometimes, the benefactors are business leaders themselves who want to give back to society, letting their entrepreneurial light shine on and guide the wannabes. Or it could be just about anybody who wishes to make a change in the lives of other less fortunate people.

It always irked Arun Goyat, 36, that more doors opened for students from IITs and IIMs when it came to placements in reputed IT companies. He had studied in a tier-2 college and this had dented his employment opportunities a bit. After a

four-year stint in HCL, he started his venture GTS, which did well for five years, but lack of funding led to its closure. Finally, his experiences on the job front and his entrepreneurial flair led him to start Code Quotient in Mohali.



CODE QUOTIENT, Mohali

Here, students are allowed to brush up on the fundamentals and then the latest in web development. The last two months are spent working on software development projects, allowing them to understand the practical application.

"We have a 90-95 per cent success rate in placements with a ratio of three teachers for every four to five students. On getting a job, the student has to part with 20 per cent of the annual pay package. Training is free."

Arun Goyat, Founder

"I put forth a proposal to the Kurukshetra University in Haryana, saying that I would train their students and they would have to provide the infrastructure. This went on for about one-and-a-half years with other colleges too asking me to train their students.

This is when Code Quotient came into place," says Goyat, adding that in tier-2 and tier-3 colleges, there is no proper learning and placement facilities making it an uphill task for the students to secure a job. From 9 am to 7 pm, students at Code Quotient occupy themselves with brushing up on the fundamentals and then the latest in web development. The last two months are spent working on software development projects, allowing the students to understand the practical application.

"We have a 90-95 per cent success rate as far as placements are concerned with a ratio of three teachers for every four to five students. On getting a job, the student has to part with 20 per cent of the annual pay package. Training is entirely free," reveals Goyat. He cites the case of a student, Rahul, who was unsure whether to go into programming or networking.

We helped him decide, and today he draws an annual salary of `8 lakh. Some students drop out as they cannot handle the pace, he adds. Come January, Goyat plans to start 'Super Coder' wherein 30-40 students from tier-2 and tier-3 colleges will be taught about the newest technologies free of cost. There are also plans to go online with a pilot project coming up in several colleges in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

In the case of 25-year-old engineers Pawan Sharma (Noida) and Ayush Agarwal (Gurgaon)—both from farming backgrounds—education provided the bulwark to construct their dreams and hopes on. The duo found a way to get back to their

roots helping in the bargain hundreds of farmers eke out a profitable living, courtesy 'Kaushal Gram'.

Whenever Sharma got an occasion to visit his village, he saw the pathetic conditions the farmers laboured under and vowed to improve their lot. "Both Ayush and I used to teach at an orphanage which is where I first met him and bound by our mutual interest in farming, we decided to help the farming community at large," says Sharma. They travelled across the villages of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh trying to understand farmers' dilemma. Later, they researched about the various kinds of farming in the world and combined successful practices from different farming philosophies. "We realised that natural farming was the best and cost-effective too. For instance, farmers who were spending `10,000 per bigha on fertilisers and pesticides need to spend just `500 by resorting to organic fertilisers," explains Sharma.



DESICREW, CHENNAI

The BPO employs rural youth with a minimum qualification of 12th pass with free training provided for shortlisted candidates. They are absorbed into the company depending on the training outcome. Women form 70 per cent of Desicrew's workforce, handling all functions across the management and being critical to the operations.

"We route the work to the rural centres in tier-2 towns, and villages, and working in shifts ensures that we cater to global clients round the clock."

Ashwanth Gnanavelu,
Co-founder

Also, crops grown organically would fetch a better market price. However, convincing the farmers was a big task. "We got around that by showing videos of farmers who had adopted natural methods and gained rich dividends, besides training them in the technical aspects of natural farming—how to make fertilisers, selection and sowing of seeds, etc," says Sharma.

Through 'Kaushal Gram' on YouTube, they have reached out to 1.5 lakh farmers, besides using technology to

impart useful farming information, courtesy SMS to their cell phones, the cost of which is borne by them. Creating a low-cost biogas plant and solar dryer are the other achievements to their credit, pooling in as they do 1/5th of their monthly income to keep the business up and running. Next on their agenda is the tribal area of Chitrakoot in Uttar Pradesh where they want to acquaint farmers with sustainable farming methods.

In Mumbai's Dharavi, local tourism has been inducing winds of change in the lives of financially-strapped students—those moonlighting as tour guides support their education and family. Their benefactor is Dharavi resident Fahim, who employs students in his venture, 'Be the Local Tours and Travels'. Shares Fahim: "We employ students who are financially weak and whose dream is to study well. Our guides are also provided loans at zero per cent interest rate for educational purposes or to meet any family emergency."

The idea occurred to Fahim on account of the struggles he had experienced as a student studying in third grade. His father became mentally ill and the onus of supporting the family fell on him. His dream of getting a BCom degree came to naught and hence Fahim wanted to make sure that other students did not suffer a similar fate. Shan, the company's manager, explains how they quickly skill the students.

"We train the students for only two to six months depending on each one's competence. Knowledge of English being imperative, we give them practical training without going too much into grammar and initially they accompany experienced tour guides to see how it is all done. I remember once a student



asking me the meaning of champagne."

That the enterprise has come as a boon to poor students is hardly surprising. "Razak lost his father at an early age and his mother was working as a domestic help. He has now completed his master's and is working with TCS," shares Fahim, beaming with pride.

High up in the mountains, another tourism venture is making a positive impact on the lives of the people there.

Spiti Ecosphere, a socially responsible tour operator, focuses on local livelihoods, conservation and sustainable development in the trans-Himalayan valley. Says founder Ishita Khanna, "We plan responsible tours across the valley which means we calculate our carbon footprint per travel and offset it by our green initiatives. After meeting administration expenses, all the revenue earned is plowed back into the community."

Take, for instance, the sustainable agro practices in the valley where growing vegetables is a challenge. Villagers have to trek all the way to Kaza, the main town, to buy produce. "To solve the problem, we decided to build greenhouses

with the families for whom it is built providing the labour, while the cost is borne by us,” says Ishita, adding that people now grow tomato and spinach—a staple in their cuisine—as well as radish and other vegetables. Some 20 solar geysers have also been installed. Another green initiative is simple architectural enhancements made to the local homes called solar passive houses.

These are structures insulated with glasses and double walls so as to trap the heat inside as against the practice of burning wood to stay warm. Minus 30 degree temperatures are brought down to 10 degrees, courtesy this method. Snow is the lifeline to Spiti ecology; so they are developing check-dams along the stream at a particular interval so that water starts accumulating behind the dams and forms glaciers, explains Ishita.



The timeless heritage of Indian art and crafts might find itself on its way out, but for the effort of countless organisations, which are championing its cause vigorously. Rangсутra is one such company, comprising artisans spread across Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. “Our goal is to ensure sustainable livelihoods for artisans and farmers, by creating top quality handmade products based on the principles of fair trade. Profits earned from sales go back to ensure a better life for the communities, as producers are shareholders in Rangсутra,” says founder Sumita Ghose, who was always keenly interested in the welfare of the underprivileged ever since she was a young girl growing up in Mumbai.

Sanjoy, who was to be her husband later, was studying for a degree in rural development at Elphinstone College and it was no surprise that their career trajectories coalesced. Sanjay started the URMUL Trust whose activities encompassed community health, nutrition and clean drinking water. During the 1987 famine, a wool-spinning project was started to provide income to rural women, which later turned into an income-generating project for spinners and weavers in western Rajasthan. Village sangathans (collectives) accelerated the growth with several URMUL organisations in place all led by local people.

After Sanjoy's death at the hands of ULFA militants, Sumita started Rangсутra being funded by the artisans themselves with 1,000 of them pooling in `1,000 each. The company now has 2,000 artisans who are shareholders and Sumita works with them closely, from the point of creating designs to selling the end products to the consumer. "A company share, framed and prominently displayed on the wall of an artisan's hut in rural Rajasthan, signifies a small but important transformation taking place in the lives of craftspeople," says an elated Sumita.

MOHAN PRASAD



BANKA SILK, Bihar

Launched in 2015, it provided the artisans an instant identity boost. Next, the products were displayed at various exhibitions, trade fairs and fashion shows to create awareness and build the Banka brand. Now, a handloom cluster is to be put into place—an ecosystem that focuses on handloom research, design and creation and training of the local artisans and craftsmen in Banka.

"I source out designs that will make the products suited to the contemporary market, finance the buying of raw material for the weavers and link them to the market."

Udayan Singh, Social Entrepreneur

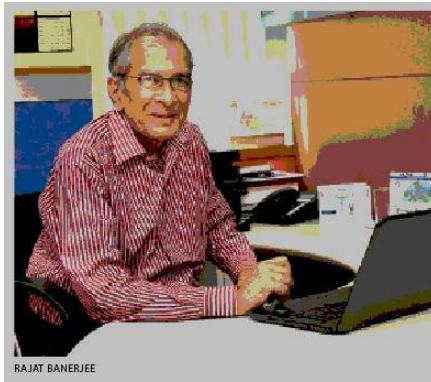
Similarly, Banka, a small town in Bihar, which once boasted a great weaving tradition and whose weavers had been reduced to penury, was put on the international map, thanks to the efforts of Udyan Singh, a civil engineer-turned-social entrepreneur. Says Singh: “Banka lost its sheen in the face of mounting debts faced by the artisans and hardly any government recognition. Each weaver would work with a middleman and the finished product would be sold as a one-off item without a distinctive trade identity to back it up.”

Riding piggyback on the once famous Banka name, Singh started Banka Silk in 2015 providing the artisans an instant identity boost. Next, the products were displayed at various exhibitions, trade fairs and fashion shows to create awareness and build the Banka brand. Now, a handloom cluster is to be put into place—an ecosystem that focuses on handloom research, design and creation and training of the local artisans and craftsmen in Banka. “I source out designs that will make the products suited to the contemporary market, finance the buying of raw material for the weavers and link them to the market,” says Singh.

Artisan Tarzan is all praise for Singh who he says put an end to the woes of the weavers. “Earlier middlemen profited from our labour; now we work directly for the customer. The visibility and recognition that Banka Silk has received has meant that the government now gives us benefits,” he shares.

A BPO flourishing in the rural sector with women forming the mainstay of the organisation—that is not a pipe dream, rather it pans out as a lucrative business model with tremendous societal impact. That’s Desicrew, founded in 2007 with its base in Chennai and delivery centres in rural Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Co-founder Ashwanth Gnanavelu says, “We route the work to the rural centres situated in tier-2 towns and villages, and working in shifts ensures that we cater to global clients round the clock.” Desicrew employs rural youth with a minimum qualification of 12th pass with free training provided for shortlisted candidates. They are absorbed into the company depending on the training outcome, shares Ashwanth. For most Process Transitions, ‘crewmates’ have been certified by the clients. “The rural team members even worked on a GIS activity, which involved plotting data on digital maps.

Though they had not travelled outside of Tamil Nadu, they ended up working on over 75 countries,” smiles Ashwanth. Women form 70 per cent of Desicrew’s workforce, handling all functions across the management and being critical to



ANUDIP

Creates digital livelihoods for youth from impoverished communities. Runs 150 centres across West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Delhi/NCR, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and has expanded to Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. More than 70,000 have benefited from the market-aligned training.

"We first examine the education levels in at-risk communities along with the skill needs of the new-age employees in the internet company. The company offers best-of-class affordable skilling courseware ranging from basic IT skills, concept of hardware and software, to social media, mobile apps, analytics."

Dipak Basu, CEO & Founder

the operations. "They have shattered several local barriers such as working across shifts, travelling on-site for training and being a reliable workforce.

We have young homemakers, college freshers most of whom are first-generation knowledge workers. With the incomes generated, the marriageable age of girls has come down considerably," he says.

Some 1,000-km away from Chennai, in the beautiful Sunderbans region of Kolkata, another organisation is striving to create digital livelihoods for youth from impoverished communities. That's Anudip Foundation, established in 2007 with its first three centres being set up in Sundarbans, Joynagar and Joka in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district. Anudip's CEO and founder Dipak Basu shares, "Our first centres were teaching prototypes launched in partnership with community NGOs, with Anudip providing faculty, training equipment, student mobilisation, training and placement services." Now, Anudip runs its own centres, all 150 of them, spread across West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Delhi/NCR, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and has expanded to Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

More than 70,000 students have benefitted from Anudip's market-aligned training. Explains Basu, "We first examine the education levels in at-risk communities along with the skill needs of the new-age employees in the internet company. Feedback and recommendations from the employers help us customise our curriculum to help job-aspirants fill the skill gap. Using latest technologies, the company offers best-of-class affordable skilling courseware ranging from basic IT skills, concept of hardware and software, MS Office applications, social media, mobile apps, analytics, cloud computing to financial and digital literacy."

English, personality development and entrepreneurship training are also thrown in for good measure. Later, the students are placed in various companies. Anudip has a tie-up with 300-plus employers from all over the country and organises

RAJNEESH LONDHE



BETHE LOCAL TOURS AND TRAVELS, Dharavi, Mumbai Students are trained for only two to six months depending on competence. They are given practical training in the English language without going too much into grammar. Initially, they accompany experienced tour guides to see how it is all done.

"We employ students who are financially weak and whose dream is to study well. Our guides are also provided loans at zero per cent interest rate for educational purposes or to meet any family emergency."
Fahim, Founder

monthly recruitment drives called DISHA. "In the past five months, 1,000-plus students have been shortlisted and given job-offers from multiple employers at DISHA," says Basu.

Anudip, which completes a decade this year, has now embarked on a three-year

strategic initiative called Digital Inclusion of Young Aspirants (DIYA) so as to digitally equip 100,000 students by 2020.

When a global philanthropic network has community improvement on its mind, you can be sure of good tidings all around. That's SVP International, which is seeking to bring about a transformational change in philanthropists, leaders and communities with 40 SVP-affiliated organisations in nine countries. Each SVP invests in its local community, but is linked to the global movement perpetuated by SVP International.

SVP India was started five years ago with convener for SVP Pune, Ganesh Natarajan (former Vice-Chairman and CEO of Zensar Technologies), having been invited to join the international board last year. On SVP's India presence—now centred in Mumbai, Pune and Bengaluru—Natarajan threw light on the Million Jobs Mission, an endeavour to bring together global partners with expertise in design, funding and implementation so as to create an ecosystem to train and empower one million people in the country by 2020. "We have already started identifying 15 NGOs with plans to create 1,000,000-plus sustainable livelihoods each in the next five years," says Natarajan, whose successful corporate career is well matched by social triumphs such as family foundation, Natarajan Education Society, and other ventures such as 5F World and Global Talent Track. Skilling India might well be all that it takes for India shining to be a reality.

Stay up to date on all the latest **Magazine** news with The New Indian Express App.

Download now

 **More From This Section**



Offering Ovenful of Love and Cheer



Mind Shapers



Chief Political Marathoners

You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola

Did You Know About Oshiwara District Center being the Next Growth Center of Mumbai

Sunteck City

Parents of LKG to Std 10 Kids are Loving This

Curiositi

Online HR Program from XLRI

XLRI

Do You Know Your Credit Score? Check Online!

Credit Mantri

Alanna Dew Fresh Day Cream

Rs.450 - nykaa.com

Body Gestures You Should Avoid in the Workplace (22 Examples)

Work + Money

Comments

Write a comment...

Name

Email

Post

Latest

Cauvery issue: Centre seeks two-week extension to draft scheme

CBI submits status report in Unnao rape case

Soumitra Chatterjee, Buddhadeb Dasgupta conferred lifetime achievement awards

Malayalam detective fiction writer Kottayam Pushpanath passes away

Varappuzha custodial death case: Kerala announces compensation for victim's kin

Kapil Sharma sends legal notice to Spotboye, journalist; seeks Rs 100 crore for maligning image'



Comeback of Entertainme...
Entertainment



Entertainment

04:33

Entertainment

Comeback of
Entertainment Ki
Raat | Exclusive

I Am Not

Powered by 

More From The Section



Offering Ovenful of Love and Cheer



Mind Shapers



Chief Political Marathoners



Master Speedster



A Lesson from Sports



The rebel

Videos



Six people sitting atop a bus electrocuted in Bihar's Rohtas



Due to Karnataka govt's apathy, farmers have not received benefit of 'Fasal Bima Yojna': PM Modi

Gallery



Villupuram's Koovagam festival in pictures: A celebration of transgender identity

IN PICTURES | Chennai transgender Mubina wins 'Miss Koovagam 2018' beauty pageant title

Trending

14 out of world's 20 most polluted cities in India: WHO

Couple beaten up for hugging in Kolkata's Dum Dum metro station

Indian-American owned IT company fined for H1-B visa violations

#HokAlingon: Youth hug to protest against Kolkata Metro moral policing

Asian Games will be tougher than Commonwealth Games: Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra

FOLLOW US      

Copyright - newindianexpress.com 2018

Dinamani | Kannada Prabha | Samakalika Malayalam | Malayalam Vaarika | Indulgexpress |
Edex Live | Cinema Express | Event Xpress

Contact Us | About Us | Careers | Privacy Policy | Search | Terms of Use | Advertise With Us
Home | Nation | World | Cities | Business | Columns | Entertainment | Sport | Magazine | The
Sunday Standard