

Presentation by Ranjana Kanti given in Women Leaders Conference on 18th December 2009 at Palms Hotel, Mumbai

SLIDE 1. –

Helping to change society: Philanthropy, the Indian Way

Good Morning Friends! I am Ranjana Kanti and involved with three of my husband's companies – E-dutainment Unlimited, Clay n' Color Communications & Redstreet Productions. But this is not my introduction today. That you shall know during the course of this presentation.

I am here to share what I feel about Social Change and relevance of Philanthropy.

This is a topic that I feel very passionate about and sincerely thank the organizers for giving me an opportunity to share my views on this.

SLIDE 2.

Here is an overview of what I will be sharing with you

- 1. Philanthropy**
- 2. Philanthropy in India**
- 3. Philanthropy - Women**
- 4. Me, My Opinions & Social Work**
- 5. Me, Philanthropy & Social Work**
- 6. Philanthropy, Social Change & Beyond 'Me'**

SLIDE 3. - Philanthropy

Let us try to understand what Philanthropy is.

SLIDE 4. - Philanthropy

It is very hard to come up with one definition of Philanthropy.

Different people have different opinions about it. Some say that Philanthropy means Voluntary promotion of human welfare

Well, Philanthropy is actually derived from Ancient Greek, which simply means "to love people".

However nowadays, the term usually refers to the act of generosity associated with donating money, goods, services, time, and effort to support a socially beneficial cause.

Activists may define Philanthropy as an idea, event, or action that is done to better humanity. It usually involves some sacrifice as opposed to being done for a profit motive.

One thing I do believe is that Philanthropy should be about having "NET POSITIVE" effect rather than offsetting any NEGATIVE happening. For example – a Company trying to offset their Carbon Footprint is not a 'philanthropic act' as they are 'just cleaning their mess'.

When we talk about any charity or service, two acts come in our mind- The Act of Giving and Receiving - Giving cannot be called superior and Receiving should not be termed inferior as Future of Giving depends upon Receiving. If there is no one to take, whom are we going to give?

Now the question is - WHY be Philanthropic?

When we see images of War-torn areas, Places affected with natural disasters makes us question - 'Whether God even exists?'

But while seeing picture of happy family, laughing children makes us believe 'This is an act of God'.

That is because – GOD is not some separate divine entity which is very selective about location. It's because "HUMANITY within us is GOD"

The best prayer we can offer to God is service to humanity.

The words 'Humanity, humane' etc. are by themselves philanthropic words.

It is in our nature. It is beneficial to oneself and act of selflessness.

SLIDE 5. - Philanthropy in India

Let us now explore the history of Philanthropy in India

SLIDE 6. - Philanthropy in India

Philanthropy in India is guided by religion and the demands of caste, family and community. Giving is primarily directed towards religious organizations.

We all are familiar with the concepts such as –

- “Daana” and “Dakshina” in Hinduism,
- “Sadaqah” (which is voluntary charity) and “Zakat” (which is obligatory charity) in Islaam, and
- “Bhiksha in Buddhism

These are concepts of philanthropy which are deep rooted in our culture.

In the modern time, philanthropy has also extended to corporate involvement and the rise of non-profit organizations working towards the country's development.

Looking back at the history and the primary motivation behind religious “giving” was the belief that charitable activities lead to one's salvation.

However in early 20th century, ideas of equality, human rights, and other related causes, social action groups started to emerge, fighting for women's empowerment, removal of untouchability, promotion of education and others.

These were initiated by well-known social reforms, many of which had close links with the freedom movement of the country. The participatory nature of these movements encouraged Volunteerism and gave a new meaning in the wake of India's struggle for freedom, with Mahatma Gandhi giving India a vision of Swaraj (self-rule), Ahimsa (nonviolence) and Seva (service).

In the Indian corporate scenario, different business communities like Parsis, Marwaris, Khattris, Reddys and Chettiars were in the forefront in philanthropic activities.

Jamshedji Tata is considered as the father of modern Indian philanthropy. Founded in 1868, Tata Industries is the classic Indian example of a family-run business that has built a reputation for philanthropy alongside that of business success.

If we analyze the Indian philanthropic tradition of thousands of family businesses, we can see many reasons:

- It was partly because to live in India is to live in the midst of grotesque inequality,
- Also partly because families tend to be rooted in communities and
- And partly because, good schools and hospitals produce an educated and healthy workforce.

Modern corporate foundations like the Azim Premji Foundation and the Infosys Foundation and many others, support education initiatives in various states.

SLIDE 7. - Philanthropy - Women

Now the question is “Why” should women in particular take initiative, if it’s a humanitarian issue?

SLIDE 8. - Philanthropy - Women

Looking back at history Leaders are stereo-typically viewed as Male.

And few Woman Leaders like Joan of Arc, Jhansi Ki Rani who made it to the pages History - their gender has always been noted or made an issue.

To break a stereotype, strong action and force is needed and that is why we have gathered as women. This is not (or should not be) a feminist initiative. This is an initiative to 'break the stereotype'.

A feminist point of view may perhaps be that women ARE now more independent and do not need men for support.

But my personal opinion is –

Men and women are complementary and should not be viewed not based on their gender difference, but on their similarity as humans.

Though, the feminist are right about one thing, that is, women being the more sophisticated of the two.

We all know the story that "God created Man before he made Woman." And that is because you always make a rough draft before the final masterpiece.

WOMEN are the most beautiful creature of God - Why do I think so?

Am I the only one who thinks so or there are others also?

Well we are not here to debate about it but are here to analyze it.

Yes I do believe it. The beauty of woman is in her power, Yes! Her Power to Give, and in giving her power is not to set any limits.

Once a woman fully discovers her own giving capacity, and strategically and intentionally gives to the causes that impassion her, there will not be any limits to her Giving.

But the sad part is that we still live in a world in which a significant fraction of people including women believe that a woman belongs and wants to belong exclusively in the home. In major part of our Indian society, they are convinced that they are inferior - not even trying to even dream beyond it.

Remember one thing - No one can make us feel inferior without our CONSENT.

SLIDE 9. - Me, My Opinions & Social Work

I am taking myself as a case study, and I am sure many here will identify with it.

SLIDE 10. - Me, My Opinions & Social Work

People describe me as a social entrepreneur, activist, leader.

I call myself just an ordinary Indian citizen who did her bit, more as a social worker. This contribution was not even equal to drop in an ocean. I have worked for various social causes independently and through organizations.

List is long, will share a few –

From free tuition to children of illiterate parents, awareness programmes in slums, working for visually handicapped, teaching children of migrant workers, street children, helping riot affected people are some of the activities I have been involved in. Represented economically weak Parents in school for fee concession, Organized Programs of communal harmony, free computer literacy for senior citizens in my institute, helped set up training and later business for economically deprived housewives in stitching, helped them in setting up many small scale business of spices, embroidery etc, Awareness programs in slums for vaccination, cleaning, hygiene, initiated vermin culture projects, garbage segregation, conducted campaigns for environment conservation, coordinated with NMMC for relocation of street hawkers, organized various programs in municipal schools, street plays on population, anti plastic, corruption etc. For last 4 years I have been training economically weak youths in graphics & animation through E-dutainment Unlimited & home. On an average, every quarter 5-10 such youths are trained for free, and then placed into jobs.

This year I along with some other women, Initiated a movement "India Redefined", which I will talk about in coming slides

What is it that shaped me to become who I am today?

Well I had a dream and I was just 7-8 years old. There were many words to describe me-as talkative, friendly, independent, still emotional, and sometimes artistic. I wouldn't hesitate to agree with each descriptive word, except one thing which they could not see, that my interests were much beyond my friends, family, school, home.

They perhaps ignored my inquisitiveness –

Why did it matter to me to see my house hold helper Kamala in a torn saree, eating leftovers, why her children take the cloths rejected by us?

Why do they admire the toys which I left playing years back?

On the top of that two of her children much older than me, were still studying in such junior classes, had limited knowledge and could not read my books.

As a curious person, I wanted to know more and more about their lives and found that they don't have the basic things needed, and things which we call necessities in lives, are luxuries for them. Many times, my mother started finding me a careless person, who loses eraser, pencils, books whereas I gave these to Kamla's children.

I was 8 - perhaps in 3rd std., a very skinny girl, but people used to find a bright face – but with no interest in food. Every lunch break was a struggle for me to finish my Tiffin. It was easier to share with friends, but then I found a small boy always sitting near school gate in during lunch break, eating a dry chapatti with some white thing, salt I guess now. So many times, he had nothing to eat. I started giving my food to him. He was earlier reluctant to take food from me, but even at that time also it very easy for me to make friends. He started taking my Tiffin, and was happy to show an empty Tiffin box to my mother at home.

A win-win for both

His name was Tukku. I started taking interest in his Home-work. He was living in nearby slum and my school peon Prakash was his neighbor, who brought him to make him study in English medium school. At the age of 8-9 I could not understand why there is no English teaching in the school, where his neighborhood children went. He called it municipal (sarkari) school. I was wondering - why no English? – How do they study Maths and Social Studies then? I wanted to ask our English teacher Sangeeta M'am – why doesn't she go in the evenings in these sarkari schools to teach?

Giving Tiffin to Tukku, when I look back, it was more out of convenience (of not having to finish the food) than out of altruism. But seeing him eat over time, made me realize that there so many things that I wasted or did not want while someone out there NEEDED it. Moreover, if I could even take out a small portion of anything I need too and gave it someone or even shared it, I could bring HAPPINESS – to that person and to myself also. And Happiness IS infectious.

Once, I got a chance to go to my house-helper Kamla's slum Basti, along with my mom, to cal her on a Sunday evening as some unexpected guests had come. That was the time, I saw this part of India so closely. (A glimpse of this I had seen when I used to travel by train from Delhi to my native place, On the way you see such houses, or children without clothes, people using track as their toilet seat. But that

time it was all fun for me. One scene after another, train runs so fast that you don't get time to think about previous scene, But) that day when I was nine and half ,standing in Kamla's slum, seeing the life of a person who keeps our house so clean, I was just more than shocked. I had never seen such filthy atmosphere. Don't know why, but was little angry on Kamala, and more than her on my Mom. Why she did not show this part of India to me ever. Then I started analyzing – if all the neighborhood Aunties and my Mom together do something to make Kamla and her neighbors live in a clean environment – why can't they – when they can scold Kamala or others who clean their houses for a little negligence of same

“cleaning” part in our own house, they can take some interest in Kamla's house. And why this Kamala does not learn anything from my Mom?

I came back home and asked my Mom all these questions – her answers did not satisfy me. According to her – the illiteracy, unemployment of Kamala's husband and others like them are the major reason for that. Mom was also talking about “Fate” & “The Government”. I did not understand relevance of both the words. Who is the government? I had read in my social studies chapters – but that was all to answer the questions at the end of each chapter – Is that related to real life?

At the age of 15, I heard a story of a small 5 years old girl's sexual exploitation. Someone had discarded her body beside the highway. I was at loss of words. Felt such a pain for this small baby. I was not sure what emotions I had at that time. I felt like vomiting. This kind of thing has to end. I have the same determination today to help these victims.

That incident sensitized me to the female issues - Women are still shackled, bonded by their gender identity and sexuality. They are still sex symbols in the general perception. I was shocked and wanted to do something.

I wanted to channelize this strong urge to 'do something' which is one of the reason why I am here.

We all have seen lots of trauma in our lives. We have held hands with families who lost children, prayed with children who lost parents. I learnt about death by experiencing death of my mother in a road accident. I was then 25 years old and she must be 48. My experience in life is that when one is exposed to painful situations, we have to turn those experiences become useful and create positive things out of them.

So what did I do when bad things happened to me?

Social work as "Therapy" – for me these become connected. I just knew one thing - How can you say no to help someone else? How can you say no to help yourself? Every helper needs time to re-create and follow ones own advice. Everyone develops their own way to understand life. I chose to use the work the way I did.

For me this was as exciting as making a film, or a talk show or attending a Party. Helping others is our own opportunity. Many people are not fortunate to get such opportunities and many of them don't utilize these.

SLIDE 11. - Me, Philanthropy & Social Work

Initiation into Philanthropy

Sometime ago, someone asked me "when was the first time you did some social work?"

SLIDE 12. - Me, Philanthropy & Social Work

I remember when I was 19 years old, 2nd year of my graduation studies, in one of the activities of NSS, where we had to visit hospitals to talk to patients, go to slums for awareness campaign, and to orphanages to play with those children. I was assigned one blind student (Akhilesh), one year junior to me, in the same course of English literature which I was doing, to whom, I had to read reference books of literature, as Braille as printing was expensive. Not many books were there in Braille. This cause is still very close to my heart and I do a lot of things for this.

At the age of 9 or 10, my mom would not allow me to go to slums and do anything. But at 18 or 19, one gets that Freedom, when you start traveling alone, you are little independent to choose what you want to do, who your friends are – though, still one does not have the financial freedom.

It was then that my strong urge to 'do something' combined with FREEDOM 'to do so' that culminated in a philanthropic act.

Freedom is important. It made me realize that we all have urges and opinions but only when we get freedom we do something. In this context, its not freedom from OPPRESSION but freedom from Priorities (day-to-day activities), freedom to take your own Decisions

(e.g. that a child may not have that freedom), and Economic freedom (e.g. a freedom Bill Gate and Al Gore have).

But we all have certain level of freedom. For example – Both my sons who are 15 and 19 years old - they may not be not have economic freedom or freedom to take a decision to make a national policy on reducing Global warming, but they can plant trees, can try to make some underprivileged computer literate or volunteer or initiate youth movements.

It is our duty and obligation to satisfy the urges and use that freedom.

When something is initiated alone out of raw passion outburst, frustration or anger, it tends to fizzle out. Passion or Anger is good and needed but cannot be the sole driver. It is like the spark-plug in car engine - something that gives the movement but you need petrol or diesel to run the car.

You don't initially need to have an altruistic intention to do something philanthropic. Just do it for yourself. Why? We may initially do it for self-gratification but by doing it again and again, we shall find ourselves in a place where this self-gratification shall become irrelevant and the goodness that comes out of our action will become a motivator by itself.

... Plus the media attention could also be a good motivator.

Here, I will like to mention about PAIGAAM – an Indo-Pak Youth conference which was initially started as student's initiative by my son and his friends 4 years back in Dhirubhai Ambani International School, after his 10th board to make friends across the border. Now it is a full fledged Conflict Management movement done every year.

Another experience in my life which made me suffer with guilt and confusion -

I have been helping the children of illiterate parents for many years, who usually leave studies when after 8th 9th or 10th, as studies become difficult for them to cope up, to complete 10th, 12th, or graduation.

I now realize that I had a great contribution in increasing the unemployment of India -

One of my house helper Mukta Bai, in Mumbai had 4 children, whom I gave free tuitions for years, as after 8th 9th, three of them were going to leave studies to take up their fathers profession of white-washing and the daughter was going to help Mukta bai in her house helper's job in different houses to take up additional works and help her family in additional income.

I was the one who helped them in getting a graduation degree.

Now all of them are unemployed graduates, who don't want to take up their parent's profession, as there is no dignity of labor in India, and a degree without vocational training did not help them to get a dignified job. That is the time I realized that our education system is only helping us in making more and more people unemployed and creating migration of more and more people from rural to urban areas.

I was confused. What are we doing? What is happening? Does it mean – let them be illiterate?

I got this answer much later when in the year 2002. I, who was a computer illiterate person at that time, got myself trained into animation, graphics and multimedia. I worked at several studios including my husband's animation studio as animator, worked at various colleges as lecturer in animation and graphics and later chose Training as my profession.

Yes, I started realizing that very few people in India come to training in their own fields after they have Industry experience. Training in any field like medical or engineering also is a stepping stone before getting a job as a professional in Engineering. Any young student who comes, before taking the admission, for counseling in animation, if I ask him will he work as a faculty in animation after becoming Animator, invariably the answer is that he will only work in industry. I started training students in my husband's animation studio on live projects, by animators not by faculty (without any industry exposure), as done in University or colleges or institutes. With the money earned as the fees, I started utilizing it for slum youths who I used to bring in my studio for training in computers, graphics & animation – I was inspired by myself, one who was computer illiterate - now an animators and a known trainer in animation in several colleges. It was a struggle. But I was successful. Many such slum youths – who left studies, and could not afford to go to the known Animation Training Centers - 7th failed, 8th failed or 10th passed got trained by me and have been placed by me in the industry.

Success breeds motivation, to further work.

I am now using this mantra in 'I CARE' project within the movement "India Redefined", though it is still early days – The point is to get people motivated by executing simple activities SUCUSSEFULLY, which anyone is free to do. For example –

- Each member will make 2 people computer literate & ignite 10 people to do the same.
- Find any one slum area or dirty area, give a report notice of the exact address, the reason for negligence of

municipality, to what sq. km that area is spread, a photograph of the area, if possible, make the local people to the cleaning and ignite 10 peoples to do the same.

- Each member will plant 10 trees and take care of them and ignite 10 people to do the same.
- Each member will find their electricity consumption of 6 months in the electricity units and reduce it by 20% and ignite 10 people to do the same.
- Identify the top 3 problems of their locality, which they think India Redefined should address and ignite 10 people to do the same.
- Write quotations, poetry about India, Indians, patriotism on the India Redefined blog and ignite 10 people to do the same.
- Make 10 people join India Redefined.
- Identify the NGO's of their city.

The key aspects in designing the activities are SIMPLICITY and HIGH SUCCESS RATIO.

Here I would like to mention - Concept of Personal Energy.

In my opinion, it is not enough to use one's economic freedom only. It is nice and generous for people to donate money, but that alone cannot be satisfying.

There needs to be a sense of involvement. It does not mean that you need to spearhead every initiative, but do not make monetary contribution as an offset to the lack of participation. The message is to "Become Involved".

SLIDE 13. - Philanthropy, Social Change & Beyond 'Me'

How can we use Philanthropy to bring social change?

SLIDE 14. - Philanthropy, Social Change & Beyond 'Me'

With time, I had started getting some recognition in local newspapers, magazines, even some TV channels, showed my work in news. But interest of media was not appropriate as some of the journalists, always wanted to know the family background of these slum youth. Many times, after some of my students started earning decent salary, as an animator or designer in industry, media persons asked them embarrassing questions like - whose mother was washing utensils and who was a rag-picker. I had to stop such interviews as I had never differentiated among my students. Still I could help many families to come to middle-class levels, who were below poverty line.

In the process of identifying deserving slum youth, I met some education officers, under whom many municipal schools come, but in spite of requesting them to help me to find students who are interested to learn computers and graphics, they kept telling that all municipal schools do computer training, and one of the officer even showed me a receipt of 1000 computers which were supposedly placed in all municipal schools of the area. I then visited a number of municipal schools and after few days found that there are no computer and computer training anywhere.

I started analyzing - why is this kind of thing happening - just because corrupt bureaucrats are not accountable to ordinary citizens like us?

But why will anyone be answerable to any other person - Just because it is written in our constitution that we all have Rights?

This led to many other questions. I ask you all -

- Do we want to make India better?
- Are we Fed up of table talks with no action?
- Are we Willing to do our bit for the country?
- Are we Confused how to do this?

I think the answer will be YES

I shared my experience with some of the women in different cities from different professions and age groups and then all these committed ladies along with me started this movement INDIA REDEFINED.

(animated text to appear about India Redefined)

The movement was started by a group of ignited women to light up the fire in the hearts of very Indian citizen, to be awakened, to exercise their rights and fulfill their obligation & responsibilities. We Indians have so far silently watched the country go to the dogs and realized that the running of the country has been hijacked by people having vested interest.

This movement is for those Indians want to change the country into something which they will be proud to hand over to their children tomorrow.

As a growing movement, we plan to evolve as we come across

challenges - each one of us is a leader of the country and its time we start acting as one.

Before we Indians start demanding what government can do for us, we should start thinking what we can do for India. India can't be re-defined unless we understand the definition of a citizen! What does being a citizen of India really mean? Does it mean legal rights, voting rights, paying taxes, ability to stay forever and buying property etc.? Or "something more"? This "something more" is really a responsibility for a social and behavioral change. If every citizen defines this "something more" honestly in his or her mind then India can truly be re-defined.

Citizen rights have been provided at the cost of some duties and obligations – these could be constitutional, social, civic or societal duties, that must be and should be performed by every citizen of India.

People living in the typical social structure only know what their needs are. So the first step of India Redefined is to help people to identify problems in their locality, take ownership of it and solve it.

So how can we Redefine India?

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"By being Together" And more than 35000 people have already come together

Is there anything special required to "Redefine India"? All that is required is -

- Love for "India"
- Passion to be the "Catalyst" of change
- Belief in your "Actions"
- Trust in others to become as "Committed"
- Action to "Change" – yourself and others around you

SLIDE 15. –

My Wish List for Social Change – Stages of India Redefined

What are the changes you would want to bring out?

I am sure, everyone will have their list. Here is mine –

(Animated text)

AWAKEN INDIA – By bringing about AWARENESS, EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION

(Animated text)

CLEAN INDIA – of CORRUPTION, POLLUTION, UNHYGIENIC CONDITIONS, DIRTY ENVIRONMENT, CONTAMINATED WATER & (ANYTHING REQUIRING CLEANSING)

(Animated text)

HEALTHY INDIA – WILL RESULT FROM CLEAN INDIA and dedicating SPECIFIC FOCUS ON HEALTH ISSUES

(Animated text)

GREEN INDIA – RESULT OF CLEAN INDIA using SUSTAINABLE METHODS OF GREENING OF INDIA

(Animated text)

PROSPEROUS INDIA – The above INITIATIVES WILL NATURALLY LEAD TO PROSPERITY ACROSS BOARD

(Animated text)

HAPPY INDIA – END RESULT OF ALL INITIATIVES (it may be UTOPIAN) but SOMETHING TO STRIVE FOR

SLIDE 16. - What we need For Social Change!

So how will these changes occur?

(Flowchart to appear)

Some broad NEEDS of India, as the movement sees –

Awareness (which is Gaining knowledge),
Education (or ability to Process knowledge) and
Communication (that is, Spreading of knowledge).

All NEEDS are complementary. What I mean by this is that it is not just enough to know the term 'Global Warming' but know the causes and consequences and spread that information by making others aware.

These NEEDS then combined with Motivation and smaller activities bring out BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE in oneself.

If each of us have a behavioral change, we could solve problems like Corruption (Clean, Transparent & Good Governance), Hygiene (Good health and Sanitation), Pollution (Clean and Green Environment), and Human Relations (harmonious Relationship with each other and different communities).

India Redefined is trying to be the enablers of this behavioral change! We must target the root causes - even if it is going to take longer.

SLIDE 17. –

“I CARE” & “I DONATE” Projects - Philanthropic Way

After “I Care” project about which I had talked earlier, next project of India Redefined is “I Donate” -

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Many young girls studying in graduation or PG are helping me to implement this after 6-8 months. Students who are willing to be part of this movement will be taking the oath-

"I donate 6 months of my life in training or education, for those who are underprivileged."

I got inspired by Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach for America.

In India, education is supposed to be the great equalizer and the primary vehicle for upward mobility. But, the reality today is that all too often, where children are born determines their educational prospects.

Across the country, largest number of children living in poverty have academic and, therefore, life prospects that are dramatically different than those of their peers in wealthier communities

Mission is to build the movement to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting our nation's most promising future leaders in the effort.

"I donate" will help in recruiting outstanding recent college graduates from all backgrounds and career interests to commit to teach for 6 months in urban and rural schools for underprivileged.

SLIDE 18. - Be a Leader For This Social Change! - Thank You!

Let us not be scared to be affiliated with any political party. Instead be connected with the political system as much as possible. Use them as platforms to reach out to people rather than think of them as wardens of an ideological jail house.

Be connected to as many NGOs and Corporate houses. Build Network - Spread your idea, opinion and feeling. Do not limit yourself with diplomacy and particular set of networks or connections - Remember your main objective: To bring the social change, which can only come through spreading.

Golden Rule - 'Use any resource as long they do not hurt anyone'

Don't be scared of losing your identity. One of the biggest problem most NGOs face is the restriction of growth due to insecurity of losing their own name. Many don't co-operate with each other due to that. It is important to remember that it is about bringing social change, not creating a revolutionary product. Forget the credits. Bring the change and the recognition will come when you really deserve it.

Thank you. Any Questions?

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