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## OCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

Social Entrepreneurship is an all-encompassing nomenclature, used for depicting the process of, bringing about social change on a major and impactful scale compared to a traditional Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). It is an increasingly important concept in the study of voluntary, non-profit and not-for-profit organizations. Earlier, organizations addressing key social issues were assumed to be idealistic, philanthropic with entrepreneurial skills. Social Entrepreneurship in India is emerging primarily because the government is very keen on its promotion, not necessarily by funding it or by advising on it but by enabling it. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of the private sector with clearly earmarked funds and full-fledged action teams have played an important role in sprucing up the image of Social Entrepreneurship. The focus of the paper is to study the growing trends of Social Entrepreneurship in India and the new initiatives taken by various Social Entrepreneurs. It also gives a brief idea of different Theories of Social Entrepreneurship. Efforts are made to provide information and an exploratory study, related to the support activities of Social Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurial ventures in India. This may be beneficial in future empirical studies of the subject.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneur, NGO, Corporate Social Responsibility, India.

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## INTRODUCTION

Social Entrepreneurs mainly focus on social problems. They initiate innovation (Bulsara, Chandwani, & Gandhi, 2014) by mobilizing the resources available to build social arrangements in response to the social problems. Some believe that Social Entrepreneurship works not only as a strong catalyst in the society, but as change agents in the social sector. They adopt a mission to create and sustain social value; recognizing and rigidly pursuing new opportunities, engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation and learning. They act boldly without being limited by resources in hand and exhibit heightened accountability to the constituencies (Desai, 2001).

Regardless of the thinking or approach, Social Entrepreneurs have emerged as modern heroes who take up the challenges of tilting the unfavourable equilibrium to a favourable one. These heroes (Social Entrepreneurs) do not discourage competitors and imitators but in fact show them, how to follow the trail and are role models for them.

They then create social wealth, which can be defined as the result of social value created offset by social costs incurred (Zahra et al., 2009). India has the world's second largest labour force of 516.3 million people, the latest world bank report states that approximately 350 million people in India currently live below the poverty line, which means that every third Indian is deprived of the basic necessities like nutrition, education and health care.

The government alone cannot meet the basic needs due to number of challenges such as growing population, inadequate infrastructure, low per capita income, ageing population, diseases in epidemic proportions and illiteracy. This is the opportune time for Social Entrepreneurs who can enter and help to alleviate these issues by putting those needy and the less fortunate towards a path of worthwhile life.

### Characteristics of a Social Entrepreneur

Certain characteristics that are very unique to a Social Entrepreneur are as follows:

**Social Entrepreneurs act as a Change Agent:** Social Entrepreneurs innovate by finding a new

service, approach or a product to a social problem, by combining innovation, resourcefulness and opportunity. Realizing the problem of avoidable blindness escalating into a major concern in the Indian healthcare scenario, Dr. Venkataswamy in 1976, after his retirement founded the Aravind eye hospital.

Twelve million people are blind in India, the vast majority of them from cataracts, which tend to strike people in India before the age of 60 years. Dr. Venkataswamy started an 11 bed hospital, persuading his siblings to join him in mortgaging their hues, pooling their savings and pawning their jewels to build it. Today, the Aravind eye care system is a network of hospitals, clinics, community outreach efforts, factories and research and training institutes in south India that has treated more than 32 million patients and has performed 4 million surgeries. (Aravind Eye Hospital Case Analysis. Anti Essays)

**Social Entrepreneurs are willing to Share their Credit:** the Social Entrepreneurs are willing to share their credit of work. This can be best exemplified by the example of Amul, under the able leadership of local farmer leader Tribhuvandas K. Patel started the cooperative society. The co-operative society further developed and nurtured by Dr. Verghese Kurien led the country's first three-tier co-operative structure which was replicated all over the country under the Operation Flood Programme, known as the "Amul Model" or Diary Co-operatives.

**Social Entrepreneurs are Determined People:** Social Entrepreneurs show strong determination for accomplishment of work and taking risks. Thinlas Chorol is such an example of social entrepreneur, who displayed her strong determination by working as the first female trekking guide in the heavily male dominated trekking industry in northern India. She also started the first female owned and operated travel company in Ladakh, India.

**Social Entrepreneurs Believe in Equality:** They have a strong belief in everyone's innate capabilities, regardless of the formal education and thus contributing for the development and economic and social value. They integrate vulnerable groups, immigrants, marginal groups and new groups of the

population. Winner of prestigious award Ramon Magsaysay Award Ms. Ela Bhatt started the organization Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) positively influencing the lives of thousands of poor women, focusing on economic changes and empowering the lives of the vulnerable, marginal groups of the country.

**Social Entrepreneurs Work on the Policy of Selflessness:** They intensively work towards the explicitly formulated mission to create and thus sustain the social value and benefits to the society. The George Foundation (TGF) aims to alleviate poverty, promote health and a clean environment and strengthen democratic institutions and values in India, started by the selfless motive of Dr. Abraham George.

**Social Entrepreneurs act as Role Model:** Empowering people to change their lives. They tap inspiration and creativity in outcasts and misfits. They bring value to the disadvantaged communities. The Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC) , widely known as Barefoot College founded by Bunker Roy with the aim of women empowerment and electrification through solar power for the up-liftmen of rural people by providing them proper education, skill development, health and drinking water.

### Current Theories of Social Entrepreneurship

Social Entrepreneurship like any other sector cannot be understood only in economic sense but needs to be identified in the light of the social context and the local environment that exists. To understand this we may try and understand different theories of Social Entrepreneurship:

**I Structuration Theory:** it implies that it is impossible to detach the agent (Social Entrepreneurs) from the structure (society). (Giddens, 1979, 1984). This theory tries to attempt to articulate a thought that treats structure as both a product of and a constraint upon human action. The best example of structuration theory is of Aravind Eye Hospital in India, which illustrate the example of the agent Dr. Venkataswamy who altered the socio-economic context (society). This theory provides important interaction, thus providing an eye to examine how the context enables the appearance of Social Entrepreneurship and how social change occurs.

**II Institutional Entrepreneurship:** DiMaggio (1988) introduced the notion of Institutional Entrepreneurship, to explain how institution rises or changes. The institutional actors are the ones who have keen interest in modifying institutional structures or in creating new ones. This entrepreneurship is a promising one to understand the role of Social Entrepreneurship in altering or giving birth to institutions and structures. Highly embedded actors may not change existing. It's the less embedded actors who are more likely to engage in Social Entrepreneurship ventures that change rules and norms.

**III Social Capital:** it is based on three dimensions, i.e. structural capital, relational capital, and cognitive capital. Structural capital defines the potential of the Social Entrepreneurs for their access to information, resources and support. The Relational capital focuses on the relationship of the social entrepreneur with people and other bodies on aspects such as trust, respect and understanding. The best example of relational capital would be of Grameen Bank's Credit delivery system. Finally the cognitive capital is the degree to which an individual shares a common code and systems of dealing within a community (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

**IV Social Movements:** researchers have focused their efforts on four key issues, they are:

- Political opportunities and threats;
- Resource mobilizing structures and active appropriation of sites for mobilization;
- Collective action frames and identify formation;
- Established repertoires of contention and innovation collection act by challengers and their member opponents (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly , 2001).

Social Movement is concerned with social transformation. All these theories are very important to an extent to find out how Social Entrepreneurs detect and manage problems and whether they learn from these failures and change accordingly (Mair, Johanna & Marti, Ignasi, 2006).

### Social Entrepreneurship in India

Social Entrepreneurship has significantly progressed in India over the last decade and with

each passing day a greater number of people are using entrepreneurial skills in building sustainable enterprises for profit and non-profit purposes according to Deval Sanghvi, the President of Dasva, an organization that acts as a channel between those investing in social change and those spearheading the changes (Khanapuri & Khandelwal, 2011).

In India, Social Entrepreneurship has been gaining ground in various sectors of the economy with more and more youth evincing interest in the field, including those from prestigious Indian institutes of Management (IIM) and Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) (N. p., n. d. entpracreview.org). The orientation of 'giving', the need to fulfil one's duty towards the society, (as opposed to fulfilling individual needs) is deep rooted in Indian social values and identity (Chakraborty, 1987).

A study by Srivastava and Tandon (2002) for the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) throws some revealing insights about the nature and magnitude of the proliferation of Non-Profit voluntary organizations in India. The survey found that:

- There are 1.2 million non-profit organizations in India, which engage nearly 20 million people as paid employees or on volunteer basis.
- However, 73.4% of these organizations were very small with one or two paid employees; in contrast, only 8.5% had more than 10 paid employees.
- While 26.5% of these NPOs were religious in nature of their activities, the rest were secular bodies focusing on social development issues such as education, healthcare, community development.
- The estimated receipts of funds by these NPOs were Rs. 179bn (1999-2000). However, 80% of this was generated from local activities, community contribution and donations; among these 51% were self-generated, while 12.9% came from donations and 7.1% from loans.

Social enterprises directly influence social needs through their products and services rather than indirectly through socially responsible business practices such as corporate philanthropy, equitable wages and environmentally friendly operations, or

through unrelated business activities initiated by non-profit organizations.

India is a key player in developing Social Entrepreneurs (Bulsara, Gandhi, & Porey, 2013). Social Entrepreneurs have been around since human beings started to form social groups.

Entrepreneurs are believed to have an exceptional ability and a foresight vision to seize new opportunities (which others can't foresee), the intense commitment and the drive to lead and to bear the uncalculated risk.

They have the unique quality of out-of-the-box thinking with unique determination of bringing something new to the society.

Social Entrepreneurs perform a similar function in the social economy, filling gaps in social needs that are left unfilled by businesses and the government. Their limited resources do not stop them from achieving their visions and mission of life.

Due to the growing population, and ageing population, etc., the government alone cannot meet the needs of the health issues in the country, realizing this issue Dr. Venkataswamy came up the idea of establishing the GOVEL Trust under which the Aravind Eye Hospital was founded. The main objectives of the hospital were to help to some extent the issue of avoidable blindness rapidly escalating a major cause of concern in the Indian health scenario.

Started in 1976, it has grown into a network of eye hospitals that have seen a total of 32 million patients in 36 years. The model of Aravind Eye care hospitals has been applauded all over the world. The hospital was named after

Sri Aurobindo, one of the revered spiritual leaders of the last century, which insist on transcendence into a heightened state of consciousness & becoming better instruments for the divine force to work through, Aravind Eye Hospital 4(2009). Some of the other Social Entrepreneurship ventures in India are as follows:

Organization	Introduction	Objectives	Business Model
<b>Amul</b>	It is an Indian dairy cooperative based at Anand, Gujarat, India. It is the largest food brand in India. It has become the world's largest vegetarian cheese and the largest pouched milk brand. It is available in more than 40 countries in the world, covering major markets of USA, Africa, Gulf region SAARC neighbours, Singapore, The Philippines, Thailand, Japan, China, etc.	To spur the 'White Revolution' in the country and to make India the largest producer of milk and milk products in the world. To help in alleviating poverty and allowing the feminine gender a larger say in the business chain.	The Amul Model is a three-tier co-operative structure. This structure consists of a Dairy Co-operative Society at the Village Level affiliated to a Milk union at the District Level which in turn is further developed into a Milk Federation at the State Level. Milk collection is done at the Village Dairy Society, milk procurement and processing at the district Milk Union and milk and milk products marketing at the state Milk Federation.
<b>Selco India</b>	It was founded in 1995 by Dr. Harish Hande, alumnus of IIT Kharagpur, have installed solar light systems in 125,000 houses and aims to reach over 200,000 households by 2014.	To uplift the quality of life among the underserved & deprived by providing reliable and safe electricity using solar power.	It is based on a two-pronged approach; creating customized solar lighting systems based on the specific needs of the customers and helping them access tailored loan and credit packages to purchase sustained lighting. They have a very open business model on need basis.
<b>Ladakhi Women's Travel Company</b>	Founded by Thinlas Chorol in 2009 has written articles on tourism in Ladakh and other issues, she was the first female guide in that region.	First company in Ladakh that is owned and operated by women & provides tourists with women guides & porters for conducting treks & tours.	It runs the following programs; Baldev Medical & Community Centre & Mobile Medical Camps. Livelihood & Community development Programs. Women's Empowerment Program
<b>The George Foundation</b>	Founded by Dr. Abraham M. George in 1995 for the purpose of launching projects to shape the future of poor children of India to bring them in mainstream & turn them into wholesome, productive members of society.	To alleviate poverty, protection of health & the environment & importance of governance.	It runs the following programs; Baldev Medical & Community Centre & Mobile Medical Camps. Livelihood & Community development Programs. Women's Empowerment Program
<b>eJeevika</b>	Ms. Richa Pandey Mishra founder of eJeevika, has been awarded with many prestigious awards like "Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year 2010" by India Today, "CNBC young Turk-Year 2009-10", "Social Entrepreneur", 2009-10, etc. and many more to the list.	It gives the youth an alternative to agriculture and allied jobs & also improves the employability of rural youth, who are trying for better livelihood opportunities in cities.	It identifies entrepreneurs through village council heads, non-profits & self-help group & offers them franchise.
<b>Digital Green</b>	It builds and deploys information & communication technology to amplify the effectiveness of development efforts around the world to affect sustained social change.	It is dedicated to improve the social, economic and environmental sustainability of small farmer livelihoods.	The unique components of Digital green are: a participatory process for content production, a locally generated digital video database, human-mediated instruction for dissemination & training & regimented sequencing to initiate a new community and feedback channels.
<b>SKS Microfinance</b>	It is a non-banking finance company (NBFC), regulated by the Reserve Bank of India, founded by Vikram Akula in 1997. It operates across 19	Its main objective is to eradicate poverty by providing financial services to the poor.	It follows the Joint Liability Group model. It involves lending to individual women, using 5-member groups as the ultimate guarantor for each member. Group lending

	states in India.		situations due to asymmetric information are better managed. Social collateral replaces asset collateral.
<b>Barefoot College</b>	Runner up in 2008 Buckminster Fuller Challenge, founded by Bunker Roy. The college has trained more than 3 million people for jobs in the modern world.	Its main objective is to work in the fields of education, skill development, health drinking water, women empowerment and electrification through solar power for the upliftment of rural people.	The programs are influenced by the Gandhian philosophy of each village being self-reliant. They take students, mostly women from the poorest of villages and teach them to skills such as install build & repair solar lamps & water pumps without the need to read or write.
<b>Global Indian Foundation</b>	It was conceived by a diverse group of professionals including retired civil servants, service officers, businessman & academia from all over India	Its main objective is to work towards reducing risk & vulnerability & promoting livelihoods through rejuvenating the resource base with an empowerment & enabling process.	It conducts workshops and road shows by inviting voluntary service by professionals.
<b>DARE</b>	The Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) was established in the Ministry of Agriculture in December, 1973.	A government of India initiative run under the aegis of Agri.	Disseminates information about various government schemes governed by the policies & Programmes of the government.
<b>CRY</b>	Founded by Rippan Kapur to restore children's rights in India.	It focuses on the 4 basic rights defined by United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) they are survival, development, protection and participation.	Children are encouraged to participate in various activities and the sales proceeds of the products as well as donations are ploughed back.

### DhanaX

DhanaX is an online/offline people-to-people lending platform that lets Indians to lend and borrow money from fellow Indians. It leverages the power of technology to bring together people from diverse backgrounds to have a common goal to create wealth and help each other. It offers various services for the

different segments of the society. It aspires to be a pioneering model for innovative and successful online social lending. Its main objective is to, support and provide easy access to low cost credit for poor borrowers to supplement their income and to provide a credible and lucrative investment opportunity for the social investor. The various services catering to different segments are as below:

Projects	Objectives	Product/Services
<b>Source For Change</b>	India's 1 <sup>st</sup> all women rural BPO, located in Bagad, a small village in the JhunJhunu district of Rajasthan, India. The main objective of this project was to empower women in the rural area by providing the right platform to be financially independent and at the same time achieve greater social outstanding.	They provide quality out sourcing services at competitive prices to clients around the world
<b>RangDe.Org</b>	It is a web based platform that raises social capital from individuals and deploys it as loan capital to low income households. It leverages the internet to lower the cost of capital through this fundraising model.	They provide a flat interest rate of 5 to 10% based on the loan product.
<b>Question Box</b>	It is the small scale telephone hotline where questions related to different problems are adhered, without significant increase in the cost.	Queries/problems are discussed
<b>DAISY</b>	The main objective of DAISY is to bridge the digital divide, ensuring better access to information for people with print	It is a digital standard where books and other reading materials are

	disabilities, language minorities, indigenous populations who do not have their own script and also the illiterate.	recorded in order to be played back in audio form as a tool for education, inclusion and empowerment.
<b>Disbursement System</b>	They provided necessary software and hardware technology infrastructure in rural areas channelled by department of Posts (DoP). This ICT system is meant for wage seekers who are enrolled under NREGS and Social security pensioners.	Disbursement of entitlements directly for the beneficiaries with the help of technology platform. Cuts down leakages & see pages of the system & time bound deliveries.
<b>Jyoti</b>	The main objective of this programme was to increase digital inclusion and empowering the underserved individuals through Community Technology Learning Centre.	Teaching computers to enhance their education and awareness to participate in community activities and to develop technology skills.
<b>HarVa</b>	To empower the rural women and thus adding to the economic benefits to the industry, to the country as whole.	It focus on all women rural BPOs, community farming of cash crops and microfinance after enabling.
<b>Solar Computing</b>	Its main objective is to provide technology at places difficult to reach, thus using the natural resources of solar energy.	It provides low maintenance computers, e-governance and education.

**SEWA**

Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA): started by Ela Bhatt, winner of prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award. It is the organization of poor, self-employed women workers. SEWA’s expansion has

taken the form of building an organization to the level that has positively influenced the life of thousands of women (poor). SEWA also worked on programmes that focused on economic changes besides other initiatives. Few of SEWA’s sister organization is given as below:

Project	Objectives
<b>SEWA Bank</b>	To address the problem of lack of access to timely and efficient savings and credit facilities and to free themselves from the vicious cycle of eternal debt
<b>SEWA Research</b>	The main objective is to connect the micro and the macro level, between the grassroots and the local development context at the micro level and the government policies and the economic development process at the macro level.
<b>SEWA housing</b>	The objective was to improve housing and infrastructure conditions of poor women in the informal sector.
<b>Gujarat State Women’s SEWA co-operative Federation Ltd.</b>	The objective was to provide comprehensive training in co-operative education, marketing management, record keeping, leadership and technical training and also to provide assistance in various areas of cooperative development.
<b>SEWA Nirman Construction Workers Company Ltd.</b>	Its objective is to work for the infrastructure development across the country, focusing on the rural development benefiting the construction industry and the entire nation at large
<b>Vimo SEWA</b>	The main objective of this integrated insurance is to provide social protection for its member to cover their life cycle needs and the various risks they face in their lives
<b>SEWA Ecotourism</b>	Its objective is poverty alleviation through sustainable self-employment, where poor and working landless women’s struggle to form and run their eco regenerative activity in the water starved area of Gujarat.
<b>SEWA Mahila Shahkari Mandli Ltd.</b>	Its main objective is to help paper picker-women.
<b>SEWA Bharat</b>	Its main objective is to highlight issues concerning women working in the informal sector and to strength the capacity of the organizations that serve the interests of these women.
<b>HomeNet South Asia</b>	It is a network organization of women home-based workers.
<b>SEWA kharaghoda</b>	Its main objective is to work with the salt workers and farmers in different districts of Gujarat.
<b>SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre</b>	Its main objective is to create sustainable livelihood strategies for the poorest of the poor



<b>SEWA Manager Ni School</b>	women producers. It started with the main objective of facilitating economic self-sustainability through building a cadre of grass root manager.
<b>SEWA ICT</b>	Started with the objective of realizing the importance and role of technology in the development of mankind. Thus it provides new information technologies in facilitating capacity development, supporting cooperatives efforts and reducing vulnerability by increasing access to information, particularly about entitlements and programs.
<b>SEWA Kalakruti</b>	It provides a platform to member artisans from craft co-operatives. It provides regular employment and helps to preserve traditional skills through cooperative efforts for self-reliance eliminating the middle man.
<b>SEWA Rachaita</b>	It started with the main objective to synergize the strength of women construction workers.

These Social Entrepreneurs can be interpreted as the second invisible hand of the economic system. Their complementary approach adds value to the creation and thus addressing to some extent to some of the most pressing problems in the country.

## CONCLUSION

Social Entrepreneurship attracts attention from practitioners, academics, and increasingly from policy makers. This paper has given an insight into the meaning of Social Entrepreneurship in India along with some examples of Social Entrepreneurship in India. It also tells us the possible reasons for a gradual shift towards Social Entrepreneurship and how it is the way to future. Some Indian entrepreneurs like Ela Bhatt, Bunker Roy, Parag Gupta, Rajesh Sinha, Harish Hande etc. have come forward and successfully tackled and continue to tackle some of the globe's most complex challenges in India.

These Social Entrepreneurs aim to contribute to the well being of the human in the human community. The different theories of Social Entrepreneurship is a fruitful topic and this article would bring us a step closer towards inspiring Social Entrepreneurship as to create social and economic value and as a field of research.

We also need to identify whether Social Entrepreneurship is an independent field or it is a

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sub-category of entrepreneurship. Social impact assessment will no longer be an alternative to the organizational tool for assessment, but an integrated and essential feature of any product or service analysis. Social Entrepreneurs act as change makers in the society who in turn influence others to contribute to the development of mankind.

Social Entrepreneurship in India has taken a new concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The Indian entrepreneurs are made aware of their social responsibility as an important business segment but CSR in India has yet to receive widespread recognition.

Social Entrepreneurship along with CSR deserves considerable attention as a field of research. This study can be further used for future empirical study for the purpose of a detailed hypothesis formulation. In the light of the new initiative by the private sector and the pure investor sector, towards philanthropic activities with a social cause, the resources and skills are available for harnessing.

The new age media and the implosion of the social networking sites and initiatives in the virtual world requires a bringing together of it with the harsh reality of brick and mortar world. The studies mentioned above will give aid in cementing a symbiotic relationship.

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