

CHENNAI • WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2005

Service with a vision

PERSONALITY Nethrodaya's C. Govindakrishnan has lent a helping hand to many visually challenged people, an effort that has earned him the Ashoka fellowship



RECOGNITION WELL DESERVED C. Govindakrishnan PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

C Govindakrishnan belongs to the newest breed of entrepreneurs — the social entrepreneurs. Worldwide, social entrepreneurs are leaving an epochal impact on society, taking the performance of their NGOs into superior planes of performance. They are getting recognised too.

This year, Govindakrishnan, whose Nethrodaya has been lending a helping hand to visually challenged, has been chosen as Ashoka Fellow by the Ashoka Innovators for the Public, an international society that discovers and promotes social entrepreneurs.

"The fellowship gives me a chance to explore possibilities in the international circuit. It also gives me a lot of confidence," says Govindakrishnan or Gopi to friends.

It all began with an innocuous train journey that Gopi undertook. To his surprise, he found that of the 119 visually challenged persons who were begging, 82 were graduates. Gopi subsequently did a more research for his post-graduate studies in Social Entrepreneurship from the Centre for Social Initiatives and Management.

Resource centre

"It prompted me to start Nethrodaya as an in-house resource centre to equip the visually challenged with skills that can get them employment," says Gopi, himself visually challenged. Today, apart from its in-house resource centre for graduating adults that catalyses college education and employment, Nethrodaya runs a 24-hour help line (26565012) for the visually challenged requiring medical assistance, a self-employment scheme, a programme that helps families access rental accommodation by convincing house owners to offer their tenements to these families. Nethrodaya's annual sports events has become a public affair. The latest feather in Nethrodaya's cap is its newly inaugurated wing for visually challenged women. All this within three years of its existence, a fact that perhaps got Gopi recognised as an 'Ashoka Fellow'.

"Unfortunately, the tragedy is that Government policies are not in synchrony with poverty. Imported fuel like petrol and LPG is subsidised even to the

tycoons while imported canes for the visually challenged are heavily taxed! The government needs to get sensitive to the needs of the visually challenged. Right from accessible public infrastructure to examination systems, we need a massive change in mindset and policies," Gopi says.

He would like to see things like more electrical plug points in classrooms for blind students to tape lessons and modified sports events for the blind in all colleges.

"Yes, we need more funds, more readers, more volunteers. It is impossible to make a social outfit self-sustaining," says Gopi admitting that Nethrodaya survives on the generosity of patrons. That's immaterial; sustaining the success it has seen in these three years will be an achievement by itself. Interested persons can give a helping hand to these visually challenged by contributing a day's food, devoting a few hours every week to read out from books, donating books or providing expertise. Contact Nethrodaya at 8, Spartan Nagar, Mogappair or call 26565012 or 93828-96636.

HEMA VIJAY



Australian Alumni Association - INDIA

June 6, 2015

Chennai

ALUMNI EXCELLENCE AWARD - 2015

Citation

Australia and India share a common culture and links that trace their origins to being part of the Commonwealth of Nations. The demographic profile of India is the envy of the rest of the world because of its distinct youthful slant comprising almost 300 million citizens in the category. Australia is a young nation that has a robust presence in the arts, sports, business, science and technology. Australia and India are natural partners in the journey towards excellence and overall development of their citizens.

The Australian Alumni Association Trust (AAAT), India is an initiative of the Australian Consulate General, Chennai, the Australian Trade Commission and a group of proactive Indo-Australian alumni, successful in their respective fields, who have come together with a vision to promote the interests of the Australian Alumni in India.

The Australian Alumni Association Trust (AAAT), India, has instituted the *Australian Alumni Excellence Awards India, 2015*. Proudly supported by the Australian Consulate General and Austrade, this premier initiative is planned as a national event reaching out to business and industry, Indo Australian alumni, educational institutions and the wider community.

The Australian Alumni Association Trust (AAAT) values the spirit of commitment and excellence and is proud to bestow

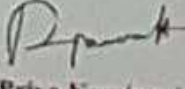
Citizen of the Year Award for Outstanding Community Service 2015 and Citation to

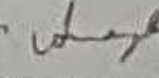
Mr. C. Govindakrishnan

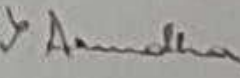
Mr. C. Govindakrishnan, a visually impaired person himself is the founder of a service organization "Nethrodaya" - a self-help institution for the differently abled working with a vision to create a suitable environment for nurturing the abilities and talents of the visually impaired and other physically challenged by means of rendering a host of career-enabling facilities to underprivileged boys and girls hailing from rural areas of Tamilnadu more than a decade since its inception on 2002.

Though he had faced many hardships due to his visual impairment, he has overcome his physical disability and not only proved his strength to the world but also lighten up the path of the many such visually impaired lives by enabling the fulfillment of their true potential.


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