



The **JOY** *of giving*

Dr Deb Prasanna Choudhury of Tata Projects has invested a large part of his resources and time in building capacities at the grassroots level to transform the lives of the underprivileged

How does one bring a change? The answer can perhaps be found in the way Dr Deb Prasanna Choudhury works. As the head of contracts and risk at Tata Projects, Deb is involved in risk assessments and mitigation strategies, alongside re-organising business processes to achieve organisational efficiency. Outside his office, he helps re-engineer the lives of many through the work done by his non-profit organisation.

It was his parents' upbringing as well as his education at the Ramkrishna Mission School in West Bengal where Deb learnt the importance

of service. Inspired with a vision for a better India, Deb chose to offer basic necessities to the needy, purely on a philanthropic platform.

The idea took shape in the form of Deb Kalika Choudhury Charity and Development Centre (DKCCDC). Instituted in Bolpur, Santiniketan, the NGO founded by Deb constitutes a vast repository of resources dedicated at empowering the underprivileged.

Deb has put together all his energies to make the underprivileged a social agent of change. The organisation provides free health care services, vocational education and training,

placement opportunities and environmental care along with skill development.

Over 200,000 patients have been treated at the Kalika Prasanna Seva Niketan, which provides free health care to the poor. Purnima Knowledge Centre imparts education, skill development and income generation training. The three-storey school building has approximately 400 students studying in it at present.

Deb's idea is to create 'social capital' with literacy as the cornerstone. He says, "Social capital is created when the senior underprivileged children in the school teach other children in their community. In turn these children teach other children. In the process, illiteracy is being eradicated at the grassroots level. This helps in creating a literate community, which is high on confidence and self esteem."

In his opinion, India needs skilled labour so at the Purnima Knowledge Centre, he has introduced vocational training to make students employable. The school provides computer diploma courses and professional training courses so that students can find jobs in the local industry.

Educating and training women has also been one of his primary motives. He has established a tailoring school within the centre that provides free one-year training to destitute women. Upon course completion, free machines are provided along with placement opportunities. He has also introduced a spoken English, personality development and office management course to help women develop soft skills.

Deb is consistently working on expanding the range of activities at the centre so that maximum benefits can be passed on to the underprivileged. The centre provides coaching for various professional exams. The women's development centre and nursing course are

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under commencement. Vocational training in music and dance has also been added to the curriculum. As a part of his commitment to sustainable environment, Deb conducts regular tree plantation drives through his NGO in Bolpur and surrounding areas.

Deb's philanthropic activity spreads beyond his NGO. He says, "Where I cannot reach people directly, I usually donate money." He undertakes various charitable activities in other countries such as sponsoring students and orphans, providing for their education, distributing free blankets and clothes to the poor, spending time with mental patients for psychological support, and so on.

His efforts have influenced several lives and that inspires him to do more. Recounting a few stories, he shares, "I have seen many sick children and adults become totally healthy after getting free treatment. I have also seen disoriented kids becoming good students and taking responsibility for the community after their association with our school as well as many destitute men and women becoming employed."

Service to the poor has made his life balanced and complete. Deb feels that everyone should experience the joy of giving. "It gives me tremendous satisfaction. Nothing makes life worth living more than saving lives, educating children and seeing jobless people employed."

And as he says, driving a social change need not always cost money. "One can always initiate change through right vision and goal, compassion and hard work." ▲

Shilpa Sachdev