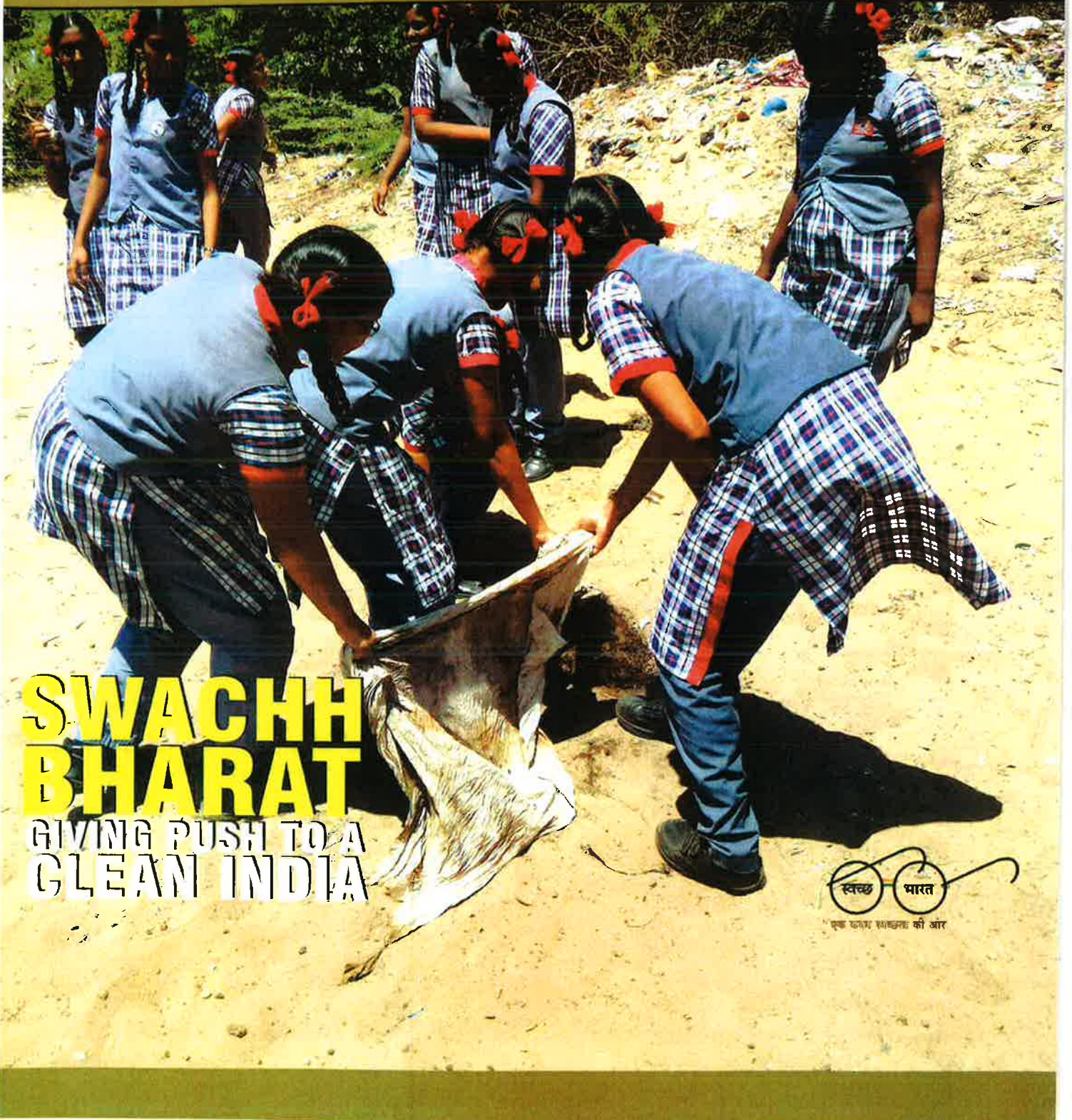


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**SWACHH
BHARAT**
GIVING PUSH TO A
CLEAN INDIA



एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

ENTREPRENEURIAL MIND FOR A SOCIAL CAUSE

SAURAV GHOSH, Ashoka Fellow 2016, shares with **NEETI JHA** the pleasures of creating wealth for the poor



Social sector activist Saurav Ghosh started off his career as a wealth manager. However, he was soon to be disillusioned with the work he was doing as he found that in India wealth management was about getting more wealth for the already wealthy. It was then he decided to create wealth for the not so wealthy. When he started doing that, Ghosh realized it was easier to do work under CSR schemes by shifting out of a plush corporate office to the more Spartan workplaces of social sector organisations.

Saurav, an MBA, was interested in the art of handicrafts and the supply chain of handcrafted products from his college days. So along with a few others he formed a company and applied for funding. The company was selected by four foundations for funding but unfortunately the laws of the land were not in their favour.

According to the existing laws, no companies in business were allowed to take donations. It was then that the NGO 'Community Friendly Movement' was born.

Saurav Ghosh Co-Founded Community

Friendly Movement (CFM) in 2005. He was responsible for driving grassroots project in areas of agriculture (Input cost reduction models, Agriculture water management, Federating farmers in producer organization format) and rural infrastructure (Drinking water - mitigation of fluoride & arsenic and Sanitation of ferroconcrete toilets).

CFM started with the idea of development at the grassroots level. Saurav believes that policies should be made according to the feedback received from the grassroots level. But there is a very strong disconnect between the policy makers and the grass roots. By the time the grass roots information reaches the policy makers, things have moved beyond help. CFM tries to reduce this gap for maximum output.

When CFM started with funds from different foundations, the team started working with some communities of Bhagalpur in Bihar, Gujarat and Rajasthan. "The focus was on three things, first how the design of the product can be improved, as artists are typically inspired by their own traditions and ideas, which is not a bad thing but to compete at the global level, fusion of designs were important. Every year internationally the trending designs would change so CFM brought these design aspects in the handcrafted products," says Ghosh.

"Then on the agenda was to multiply production and finally how to connect with the market. It was very important that the products made should reach the market. So CFM started connecting with exporters and retailers. This resulted in good number of exports. Initially, the export resulted in 1-2 crores turnover," he adds.

In 2009, government changed the law. Government passed a financial bill whereby NGO's were not allowed to do business for more than Rs20 Lakh annually. At this point the business and the NGO separated. It was then Saurav Ghosh got the complete responsibility to run the NGO.

Many projects were launched as the focus shifted to agricultural work. The priorities included promoting the practice of organic farming, conserving water and utilizing resources to its maximum. Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh, considered India's most backward district with absolutely arid climate, became his karmabhoomi.

Ghosh's journey of 12 years includes work in different sectors. He says, "Our work has mostly been the manifestation of collective experiences. May be now after working for 12 years in different sectors an opening in the wall is found. The synergy model of CFM, Walden Agri and Republic of Sports is striving to glamourize and revolutionize 'Agriculture productivity' in India. Green Revolution 2.0 is happening and we are working towards it."

Saurav represented CFM in the UN 60th anniversary celebration at the World Bank HQ in Washington D.C. CFM was selected as one of the four projects from across the globe by young entrepreneurs for showcasing during the event. He was also selected as Young Entrepreneur for Youth Social Enterprise Initiative (YSEI) and received a grant of USD 15,000.

Later on, Saurav came up with the campaign model called 'Swa Nigamit Panchayat'. CFM helped build Self Corporatized Panchayats, which can sustain their operations through their own revenues and earnings. In the first phase of implementation CFM identified 300 panchayats across 5 states to work with and unlock their value.

According to Saurav Ghosh, Swa Nigamit Panchayat is a model of economic development that hand-holds the villagers, providing them with knowledge and skills to develop sustainable enterprises and information related to agriculture, law and finance. A dynamic supply chain is being created in every village.

Each Panchayat is allotted a Community Development Coordinator from CFM who



facilitates training, provision of raw material, seed banks, improves processes, logistics, packaging, and actively works on certifications and funding activities. The Coordinator is the point of contact for local mandis, markets, state administration, academics and other stake holders.

Swa Nigamit Panchayats aim to regulate market structures leading to lesser exploitation of the bottom-most suppliers and more economically liberated Panchayats: Of the people, For the People, By the People.

In recognition of his work Ghosh was awarded 'Ashoka Fellowship' in 2016 for his work in rural India with the model 'Swa Nigamit Panchayat'. Ashoka is the one of the largest networks of social entrepreneurs worldwide, with over 3,000 Ashoka Fellows in 70 countries creating large-scale impact through new innovations. It was founded by Bill Drayton in 1980 and is an international network that is driving the social sector and offering a platform for people dedicated to changing the world. In India, Ashoka has a vibrant fellowship of over 350 fellows.

Saurav Ghosh received the Fellowship for his work in bridging the critical human and financial resources gap needed to transform Panchayats (village governance bodies) into self-corporatized units that can sustain continuous village development.

The father of two daughters, whom Ghosh credits to be the strength behind his work says, "There is no dearth of innovations but we need to build the bridges to take these innovations to communities they are meant for. In our own small way, we strive to bridge the gap and bring technology to its intended recipient."