Exploring the aspects of Social Entrepreneurship during Covid 19 pandemic in India

Monalisha Chakraborty
PhD scholar at School of Rural Management, KIIT University Bhubaneswar
monalishachakr11@gmail.com

Prasanta Parida
Associate Professor at KIIT School of Rural Management, KIIT University Bhubaneswar
prasanta.parida@ksrm.ac.in

DoI: 10.23862/kiit-parikalpana/2021/v17/i2/210549

Abstract
Social entrepreneurship has social, cultural, educational and environmental goals. The primary objective of social entrepreneurship is not to earn profits but to provide innovative solutions to solve a variety of urgent social problems for welfare of the society. Efforts are made to provide information about the challenges and opportunities of social entrepreneurship in India. This paper also attempts to shed light on different successful social entrepreneurs along with their initiatives and contribution towards society during Covid 19. A literature review of secondary data resources is undertaken to get a clear idea about the different exploratory aspects of three prominent social enterprises during pandemic such as SELCO, Goonj and Narayana Health. Social entrepreneurs experienced some critical issues during Covid 19 such as dearth of a viable business plan, Lack of funds, qualified manpower, limited to definite geographies etc. are few challenges before social entrepreneurs. There are opportunities of social entrepreneurship in terms of providing employment to rural people. So, they can explore, exploit and provide the products and services at affordable prices. Thus, generating employment opportunity which is significant for the overall development of the country.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Social entrepreneurs, Covid 19 pandemic

1. Introduction
In recent decades entrepreneurial activities are on the rise with exclusive social missions leading to the emergence of the term “social entrepreneurship”. The term social entrepreneurship was first quoted by Bill Drayton in 1980. Poverty alleviation and eradication of socio-economic disparities are the two important aims of social entrepreneurship. Social
entrepreneurship is an important process to identify potential resources and opportunities to create social values. Social entrepreneurs are innovative, resourceful, result oriented and are ready to tackle any kind of social and environmental issues.

Social entrepreneurship gives a momentum for businesses to find their own success in lieu of helping others especially during pandemic period. It is motivating for employees who wants to bring innovation in corporate work place. Uncertainty and risk associated in economic activities with present resources for future expectations. (Drucker 1985). Failure helps in making future business strategies, outcome and business growth. Risk plays a significant role and provides a platform for innovation. Social entrepreneurship helps to achieve a social change by incorporating entrepreneurial principles and operations with some kind of unpredictability. Social ventures are developed to look after the wellbeing of community, environment, child care, health, child protection, education etc.

Before going into detail about social entrepreneurship it is important to know who are actually social entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur is one with high level of motivation, innovative ideas and a critical thinker. A social entrepreneur is born when these attributes are used to mitigate social and environmental problems. Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 was awarded to Muhammad Yunus who is a modern social entrepreneur and founder of Grameen Bank. He stressed the benefits when business principles are amalgamated with social projects and enterprises.

There are different types of social entrepreneurs with their own vision. In many cases, social entrepreneurs make money but utilise it for a social cause. Social entrepreneurs can be successful as a business owner. Their main motto is to bring positive social changes by combating the basic hurdles of society. Thus, social entrepreneurship is also a way of finding pioneering and innovative ways to resolve prevalent social issues and congregation of resources, ideas, skills and social structure required for attaining social transformations. The Community Social entrepreneur helps to fulfi the social needs of a community. The primary objective of Non-Profit Social Entrepreneurs is to focus on social issues rather than material gain. They prioritize social well-being over traditional business needs. The Transformational Social Entrepreneur create a business for the larger cause of society when government has delayed to intervene. The transformational category is about evolution of non-profitable ventures with adequate time and growth. The Global Social entrepreneurs aims to solve major social needs globally. Social entrepreneurial initiatives play a very significant role in any type of disaster mitigation. At present crisis due to Covid-19 pandemic has again given a scope to the social entrepreneurs to take up different activities and mark their place in the social welfare of the society.

2. Objectives:
The main objective of the paper is to study on the topic “Exploring the aspects of social entrepreneurship during Covid-19 pandemic in India.” It is understood through the following objectives:

1. To understand social entrepreneurship and types of emerging fields of social entrepreneurs.
2. To study challenges and opportunities faced by social entrepreneurs during the Covid 19.

3. Literature review.
The developing economies of the world are common in their background in terms of socio-economic retardation and poverty. Enterprises and the communities reap the benefit of economic value. Liberation from a particular condition for economic mobilisation of communities by using some innovative strategies to earn income. (Roy and Karna 2015). Achieving economic sustainability is the way to successful social entrepreneurship without financial dependent on external sources. (Scheiber 2014). In the developing nations such perspective of social entrepreneurship is very much prevalent as identified in the past research of Asia Pacific context (Sengupta and Sahay 2017). They reached to a common observation about hybrid nature of social enterprises with double purpose to add social value and wealth.

Millions of people are devastated due to dangerous social and economic implications of Covid-19. (Kuckertz et al., 2020). Researchers of entrepreneurship has never seen a harmful virus like Coronavirus. But the welfare of the society is a significant aspect of social entrepreneurship. Roy and Karna (2015) stressed on the fact that to avoid any adversity it is important to create a social fund for the success of the social enterprises. Generation of rich social capital is one of the ingredients for the success of social enterprises (Goyal and Sergi 2015). For any type of enterprise social capital plays a vital role in implementation of ideas. (Lehtimaki and Karintaus 2012).

Choi and Majumdar (2014) mentioned about the need of further research on differences of various social entrepreneurs. In India, many welfare activities are initiated along with the participation of women to provide the basic services to the underserved people (Agarwal and Sahasrananam 2016). The concept of innovation for society is considered as an important tool for social welfare (Bhatt and Altinay 2013). It is crystal clear that social welfare is a vital entity for the process of social entrepreneurship.

4. Methodology:
The concept of social entrepreneurship is relatively new compared to conventional or commercial entrepreneurship. Suitable opportunities are identified
by social entrepreneurs to develop social values despite of the risks associated. A successful social entrepreneur tries to establish a relationship between the consumers and the social mission in association with the partners and stakeholders. Sole motto of social entrepreneurs is profit making and in turn utilising it for the welfare causes. Pro-social mission of social entrepreneurs has been holding the attention of scholars. Over the years of academic research, the concept of entrepreneurship has evolved into different forms that are still in nascent stages of research, like, social entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurship, academic entrepreneurship, political entrepreneurship, international entrepreneurship, and ethnic entrepreneurship. In social entrepreneurship opportunities are identified to distribute social value in collecting resources with some degree of risk. (Peredo and McLean, 2006)

The present study is based on exploratory aspects and has mainly focussed on three leading social enterprises of India in different fields and they are SELCO, Goonj, and Narayana Health. The lockdowns of Covid 19 have had a severe impact around the globe. Many are still struggling in emotional, mental and physical stress due to financial instability especially on the livelihood front. So, the present study is mainly adhering to the Covid 19 relief work done by these enterprises.

5. Case study of successful Social Entrepreneurs

5.1 SELCO: Solar Lighting Company for the underprivileged

With the pragmatic efforts of Harish Hande it has become possible to provide solar power technology to the poor people. It is through a social enterprise known as SELCO Solar Lighting Company. It is a pioneering rural enterprise based in Bengaluru, India since 1995. Eventually with the expansion founded the SELCO Foundation and Incubation Centre for Energy Entrepreneurs in an effort to strengthen the energy access ecosystem. His extensive experience is widely recognized as a pragmatic voice in delivering sustainable energy solutions.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2011 was given to Harsh Hande for delivering sustainable energy solutions to the poor through his social enterprise SELCO India. SELCO Foundation is a collaboration that inspires and supports sustainability across the world. To upgrade the capacity and vision of potential incubates, SELCO Incubation centre utilizes the valuable resources and intellectual skills. The concept of ‘Sola shed or Kutee’ is started by SELCO Foundation which provides solar-powered livelihood solutions.

SELCO’s innovation projects led to positive upliftment in the lives of the poor, while balancing social and environmental sustainability. Holistic approaches are needed that simultaneously encompass social, financial, and environmental dimensions. Future work involves Global replication project, inventing green and Migrant Slum shelters. For any organization to thrive and deliver services to communities, particularly in the development sector, an enabling environment is critical.

COVID RESPONSE PROGRAMME: SELCO got a new platform during Covid 19 pandemic to work for welfare of the community. SELCO has been at the frontline with its urgent response to the Covid 19 pandemic. Covid 19 have been catastrophic for communities with the most urgent healthcare needs of serious patients who require access to oxygen and ventilators. SELCO has made specific plans to tackle and manage the Covid crisis. In the pandemic crisis SELCO has undertaken many actions which includes: 1) Covid care hospitals, isolation centres, therapeutic care units and health staff quarters in partnership with public and civil society organizations like Doctors for You, Ashwani Gudalur, Seba Jagat etc. 2) Sustainable building material, solar powered solutions and efficient equipment and are being extensively used during the second phase of the crisis 3) Installed 500+ solar powered swab collections centres in remote areas. 4) Designed and, thus leading to decentralized testing process during critical periods of the 1st phase. 5) Provided basic rations and other essential supplies to numerous poor families, who were stranded during the country-wide lock down. 6) Infused capital in 30 last mile clean energy and efficient technology social enterprises for meeting the salaries of technicians and administration staff. Also negotiated with local financial institutions on behalf to restructure their respective working capital loans. SELCO also facilitated in increasing their credit periods from suppliers and provided crisis mentorship. 7) Deeply engaged with more than 200 grassroots-based enterprises, in the livelihoods and sustainable energy space, to create appropriate safety nets to prevent them from collapsing. 8) SELCO had internally restructured and created a Covid Task force to overlook all the operations. 9) The ongoing crisis is at a much larger level than the first one. On top of the existing core task force, it has created 3 more at regional levels, considering the amount of work that would have to be carried out in this phase. The learnings from the 1st phase will be critical, but the team is well-versed and aware of the magnitude and breadth of this catastrophe.

Now SELCO is focusing to inculcate three main areas to combat the pandemic which includes Partnerships and Crisis Management of Social Enterprises and Related Organizations. More efforts are given to improve the health sector and relief work.

5.2 Goonj: Famous for turning trashes into useful items

Goonj is a social enterprise which link the cities and villages with a purpose to help poor people. There is so much trash in the urban homes mainly clothes and other items which
are kept as waste material. So, those trashes are transported to rural areas for recycling into useful materials. Goonj, was founded by Anshu Gupta in 1999 with its headquarters in Delhi, India. Goonj undertakes disaster relief, humanitarian aid and community development programmes in order to support the underprivileged people. Goonj works for socio-economic upliftment of poor communities by engaging them in work to make useful items. On account of such noble work Anshu Gupta, was given the ‘Social Entrepreneur of the Year India 2012’ award.

**Covid response work:** Goonj has always played a very important role in relief and rehabilitation work in various natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunami etc. In the Covid 19 pandemic as well, Goonj has adopted certain strategies to help the poor and needy. To tackle the present pandemic situation Goonj has started one programme known as ‘Rahat’ which provides PPE Kits, Oximeters, Thermometers, Oxygen concentrators and Medicines to the frontline workers, individuals and families. Goonj has a strong impact for mass awareness about health and hygiene related lessons which mainly includes use of sanitary pads, face masks etc. People were made aware about the importance of physical distancing for families those have limited space. Ration bags were supplied to the most interior and remote parts of the country. In an effort to revive the business of street eateries, an innovative concept of ‘kichri dhabas’ was launched. Some ignored and missed out category of people like physically handicapped, HIV+, transgenders, patients, sex workers etc. were also reached out. To meet the food and nutritional demand excess fruits and vegetables from the farm were procured and transported to different communities. With the help of the Rahat Covid work, Goonj has tried to understand and respond to various needs of people through their innovative approach. Covid relief materials were transported to both urban and rural parts of the country in almost five thousand villages, twenty-seven states and union territories of India. Around five hundred fifty partner organisations have supported to reach the urban and rural areas. Almost twelve crore thirty lakh kilograms of ration and other essentials were provided to local communities through different networks. More than three lakhs ready to eat meals were supplied across urban and rural parts of the country. Nearly three lakh five thousand kilograms of vegetables and fruits were directly transported from farmer’s field. Almost fifteen lakhs of people were reached out as part of Rahat Covid work. About twelve lakh Face masks and fifteen lakh sanitary pads were made and distributed which is a result of vocational training imparted to earn livelihood. Goonj follows certain strategies and principles to maintain their values and ethos. Active volunteers, partners and local vendors of Goonj acquaint regularly with the ground level happenings. So, Goonj works at their best of abilities to understand and fulfil the needs of the people.

### 5.3 Narayana Health: Health for all; All for health

Narayana health is very popularly known as the world’s one of the best and low-cost hospital. It is commonly known as Narayana Hrudyalaya which means cardiac centre. People from different places and backgrounds across the world visit the Narayana hospital to avail cardiac surgeries at a very nominal rate. It is a humble effort of Dr Devi Shetty who founded Narayana Health in the year 2000 to provide quality health care services at an affordable rate. Narayana health with it headquarter in Bengaluru, Karnataka has a chain of hospitals including multi-speciality, cardiac centres and primary health care units in different parts of India including an international hospital. Narayana health serve with a strong mission to deliver affordable and quality health care services. In return of generosity, Narayana health have received many awards and accolades such as Corporate Social Responsibility award, Narayana Health Express Healthcare Award etc. They have undertaken many programs for the socio-economic upliftment of poor people like ‘safe school’, ‘Suposhan’ etc.

**COVID Response work:** Narayana Health have always come forward to lower the sufferings of underprivileged. People struggles to stay in good health because of medical emergency situation arisen due to outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic. Around hundred room quarantine facilities for Covid 19 patients are provided to economically weaker section of society at free of cost. Essential medications are supplied free of cost and Covid 19 patients are constantly monitored by nurses and doctors. People are made aware about the significance of hand washing with soap, use of sanitizers, face mask and to undergo immediate Covid test in case of any symptoms arise. Regularly talks, lectures, seminars, camps are arranged to impart education on health, hygiene, nutrition etc. Covid positive patients with comorbidities are encouraged to come forward for treatment to avoid further risk. The patients in the isolation facility are monitored round the clock by the doctors and nurses. The underprivileged cannot afford proper treatment in case of any severity but it has become possible with the humble approach of Narayana Health. Underserved people of the society also get the facility of hygienic accommodation along with affordable treatment. Free Covid 19 vaccination drive has started by Narayana Healthcare with a mission to vaccinate maximum number of underprivileged people in order to revive the Covid 19 pandemic situation.

Good health is the key to happiness and prosperity. So, Narayana Health aims to provide affordable healthcare facilities to the economically weaker section of the society to keep them fit. To work and earn livelihood need sound mind and body so good health is of utmost priority not only for underprivileged but for everyone. Main objective of Narayana Health is accessibility and affordability of treatment, promotion of educational facilities to talented students and overall upliftment of the economically weaker section of the
society. Corporate Social Responsibility Focus Areas include affordable Healthcare facilities, enhancing livelihood of rural youth, imparting education etc. Some of the critical projects include Rajib Gandhi Arogya Yojana (RAY), railway Clinic, Mobile Mammography Screening, Udaan (a scholarship program) etc.

6. Analysis

In India social entrepreneurs are rapidly growing across sectors like financial inclusion, livelihood, education, affordable housing, sanitation and healthcare, renewable energy, education, affordable housing, waste management, water etc. In healthcare social impact gets revealed from the number of lives saved or quality of healthcare services. Globally India is considered as one of the most dynamic country for social entrepreneurship with higher no of enterprises. It shows vibrant start-up ventures as well as good support from the investors across the globe, which makes many projects to come with employment opportunities for millions of people.

The Covid 19 pandemic had a devastating socio-economic impact across the globe including India. Due to unequal wealth, employment, housing and access to healthcare, vulnerable people are not affected. Social entrepreneurs are helping and working in the front throughout the period, providing services to those are affected. They have also been hit hard during the crisis financially and physically. Some of the social entrepreneurs are also failed miserably, and were in need of capital to support the vulnerable communities. There must be an approach to mobilise and support the social entrepreneurs.

Social entrepreneurship has good prospects in the developing countries than the developed countries as there are more disparities in terms of financial status, educational status and like in developing countries social entrepreneurs can exploit to have a sustainable business growth. They can uplift the society with creative solutions and unique service which solves the societal issues. This can lead to creation of social and economic values among the masses of the country. Since the social entrepreneurship has the basic objective to address the societal needs, which caters the low-income group of the population. So, the social entrepreneurs can get lucrative opportunity in this category. Social entrepreneurs can explore, exploit and provide the products and services at affordable prices. Thus, generating employment opportunity among the masses, which is significant for the overall development of the country.

The Covid 19 pandemic has spread in an alarming speed causing physical, psychological and economical problems globally. The economic loss experienced by entrepreneurs is quite evident through the largest economic shock across the world. Social entrepreneurs work for welfare of the society so their hurdles matter a lot. This disrupts the entire process of their mission. Some of the important hurdles faced by social entrepreneurs are: supply chain was disrupted due to lock downs, customers were frightened of the situation, shortage of labour, changes were done in the Government regulations, work was limited to certain geographies, scarcity of skilled and qualified manpower etc.

There are also many other challenges faced by social entrepreneurs. Large no of social entrepreneurs thinks social entrepreneurship as a social work but not for making money. But social entrepreneurship contributes for both creating the social and economic values. The social entrepreneurs cater the poorest population in the remotest part of the country with primary objective of creating values. Some other challenges faced by social entrepreneurs are dearth of talented, professional and dedicated workers. A qualified and a dedicated worker will demand a huge salary which is possible for the economic entrepreneurs rather than the social entrepreneurs. The primary objective of social entrepreneurs is to uplift the lower strata of the society. So, they could not attract the talented workforce to work with them. For example, a low-cost hospital for charity running
under social entrepreneurship has to employ specialized doctors. But they cannot afford to pay them high salaries which the doctors expect. So, affordability can be another challenge before social entrepreneurs in their overall employment scenario. Another biggest challenge before the social entrepreneur is that the individuals are not ready to adapt the changes proposed by social entrepreneur for the benefit of the society. They would like to continue with the conventional ideas. So, it is very challenging for the social entrepreneurs to break the mind blocks of rural people.

There are many characteristics which social entrepreneurs generally possess. Social entrepreneurs are curious, inspiring, resourceful, open, persistent etc.

An entrepreneur can turn into a social entrepreneur if they have foresightedness to turn a problem into opportunities, if they can strategically build their international network and also if they have learnt from the failure stories of other entrepreneurs.

The impact of social entrepreneurship is vital especially for developing economy and social community. Social entrepreneurship is an emerging discipline that generates social impact through entrepreneurial approach and on its social fabric.

The success of a social enterprise reflects in its ability to create social impact with high-volume customers and achieve financial sustainability through some income streams. It is vital that social enterprises have strong planning and strategic processes to identify diverse market opportunities that have multiple potential market advantages. It is imperative for them to appreciate that it would be products that would sell and generate economic benefits and not just the goodwill (Katz, 2014). An important social opportunity needs to be recognised by entering a sustainable market comprising of customers who have social need and seek value. While all of this philosophizing on the relevance of market orientation in social entrepreneurship is true, the literature review process did not reveal any research finding on what market orientation by social enterprises comprises of, in the context of developing or emerging economies. Social entrepreneurs produce eco-friendly products, serve the underserved community and focus on welfare activities.

7. Conclusion

There is a need for revolution among the people from different walks of life in creating and implementing sustainable and innovative solutions to some social issues. A growing economy India needs numerous social entrepreneurs with innovative solutions to the society’s most pressing problems in the areas of sanitation, education, water conservation, gender bias, primary health, female foeticide, carbon emissions and other environmental problems. There is need for more social entrepreneurship education in higher educational institutes. It will help to prepare and motivate the younger generation to incorporate social entrepreneurship in their professional field. With the help of the cross-disciplinary learning they can be able to contribute in tackling various societal issues innovatively.

Thus, it is seen that there are still many doors of opportunities to explore but those needs to be opened optimistically for the betterment and welfare of the society. Some Covid 19 variants like Delta, Omicron etc have elongated the pandemic period and need to follow strict precautionary measures to contain the spread of the disease. Hence, there is an urgent role of social entrepreneurs to work at the grass root level for the safety and welfare of the people. So, the purpose of the next article will be mainly to understand the strategies adopted by the social entrepreneurs during pandemic and the measures taken for economic recovery.

References


Drucker PF (1985), Innovation and entrepreneurship. Routledge, UK.


Notes to Contributors

The journal will include thematic and empirical research papers in the field of Business Management and allied areas, with emphasis on pragmatic orientation.

Before submitting the paper for publication, please ensure that this paper has not been sent for publication or published elsewhere, until you receive a communication from our side. Once a manuscript is submitted for publication, it will be screened by the editorial board to check 1. fitness of the paper for publication in the journal, & 2. originality/ plagiarism (through software).

After the preliminary screening it will then be blind-reviewed by two independent national/ international reviewers, for the scientific merit, readability and interest. Unaccepted manuscript will not be returned; however, you will be communicated accordingly.

Accepted authors will be given one hard-copy of the journal and one soft-copy. The manuscript should be neatly typed in double space on an A-4 sheet with 1 inch space on all sides in 12 Times Roman size font. The manuscript should be of maximum up to 5500 words, or 20 pages.

The references, as illustrated below, should be in American Psychological Association (APA) format, 5th Edition:

Reference from Journal:

Reference from Edited book:

Reference from Book:

Reference from online resources: