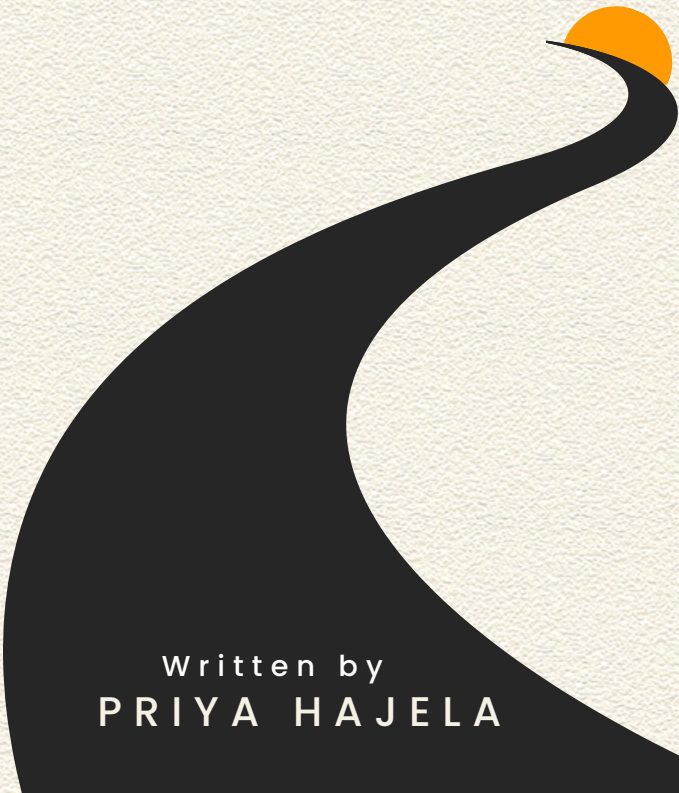




SVP PUNE NGO SHORT STORIES

# A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED



Written by  
PRIYA HAJELA

# P R E F A C E

A writer of fiction develops a mix of elements to write a compelling story. These elements don't appear in the same measure in every story. However, they all exist and with even one missing, the story feels incomplete. If one is not developed properly, the story doesn't draw in the reader or keep them turning the pages.

The elements that make up a good story are:

- Characters
- Plot and Structure
- Setting
- Dialogue and language
- Point of View

Behind each of the NGOs we support today is a story. A complete story. What we see in presentations and pitches is only the point of view. One perspective that's laid out in a form that makes sense to a specific audience – current and future donors, peers and beneficiaries. It is a two dimensional story filled with information that reflects the current state of the organization without the nuance, the depth and the plot that lies embedded.

We are here to tell you the story of each of these incredible organizations, the complete story that we hope you will be able to grasp with all your senses.



# PRAYATNA - PEOPLE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

The main gate is closed, the small gate open, gentle to push, swings easily on its hinge and is painted bright red. At 3:30pm, only 30 minutes before the end of the school day, the place is buzzing. Small groups of people occupy all the tables at Café Dil, a rustic looking coffee shop with open shelving and fresh-made cold coffee, juices, and snacks, run by the students of Prayatna. This is literally the heart of the place, a quaint brick structure in a narrow by lane off NIBM road filled with song, laughter and a rustling breeze that circles in and out of the verandahs. The property is rented but looks lived in and loved. One can only imagine what a home of their own is going to feel like. For that is the next adventure for Mridula and Radiya, co-founders of Prayatna.

Experts will tell you that the best stories are driven by their characters. Hence, it is the storytellers' job to craft characters that are capable, willing, and driven enough to move the story forward, to guide it through conflicts and complications, and to navigate to an interesting conclusion, which may well be a continuing series.

Mridula was born and brought up in Calcutta. She studied there and began working in the hospitality industry. She quickly realised that people who work in hospitality become hospitality people. Men and women trained to serve, to be impeccably groomed, to speak in modulated tones, imbibe those traits such that they become the job. While only two years in the industry, she exudes that calm exterior and can probably still wrap a sari in thirty seconds flat, pleats and pallu perfectly creased. But that life wasn't for her. She left her job and studied Special Education after some exposure to the field through a school project. She got a job at the Spastic Society of Calcutta, met her husband while working there and together they moved to Pune to start their married life.

Mridula is tall and slim, has a purposeful stride and a determined yet ready to smile face. She speaks very readily about her dogged pursuit of a productive life. Productive in a way that she has chosen, not one that has been chosen for her by her parents or her husband. Once in Pune, she began searching for places to continue her interest in Special Education, an interest that would gradually evolve into a passion that try as she might, she cannot shake.

Radiya exudes a calm radiance that you catch as soon as you open the small red gate, not knowing what it is that you are catching but once it leads you to the cramped office on the side of the Café, you realize the effect of Radiya's draw. Radiya has a sister who suffers from Cerebral Palsy. Her exposure to Special Education was firsthand and very personal. Once old enough, she was responsible for picking up her sister from her Special Ed school every day, a task she took very seriously, so much so that it led, through a winding path, to her vocation and deep passion. Radiya first thought that studying physical therapy would be a helpful skill for her sister. She couldn't find a meaningful program in Pune. She studied Science instead and then Child Development and began working at the Special Ed school that her sister went to everyday.

The radiant and calm demeanor that Radiya wears for everyone to see is not a veneer. It is the result of a lifetime of selfless caring and striving, of taking chances and realizing dreams. As a young woman, Radiya applied for a scholarship to the Spastic Society of UK and was accepted. She wasn't able to get a visa to stay on so she returned and began working in Pune, at another Special Ed school. She realised quickly, watching her sister's life more closely than ever, that Special Education in India was not very special. It was repetitive and boring, the students engulfed in condescension and patronizing voices. She had a will to improve things. Now, she just needed to find a way.

Being the person she is, Radiya readily made friends while studying in the UK. It was a small group of Irish women who showed her the way. Almost ten years after returning to India and discussing her passion with her old friends from University, she received a check in the mail. The Irish women had undertaken a cycling tour across Ireland to raise funds for Radiya's dream.

Meanwhile, Radiya had also met Mridula who had found the same Special Ed school to volunteer in. To call it serendipity would be a disservice to both the word and to the association between the two women. Their lives and their passions intersected in a way that only the universe can control, by design not by destiny.

Today, twenty five years after they first started Prayatna, the two families are close. Minor setbacks come and go but the attitude the two women carry with them, pierced by frequent guffaws of laughter, and interspersed with time honored adages such as 'it will happen when it happens,' 'never get into a comfort zone,' and keeping their dreams and their expectations realistic, propel their organization and their lives into mini adventures every day – and that's just the way they like it.





# UNDER THE MANGO TREE SOCIETY

Grey haired, cotton sari clad, vivacious and talkative, Sujana stuffs a Vada pav into her mouth as she continues her Zoom call, moving her face away from the camera a little but not enough that she can't be seen. She doesn't want the work to stop, especially not for something as trivial as eating. As Executive Director of Under the Mango Tree Society, Sujana is running and managing and coordinating and measuring – all the time. The organization's reach is growing, but not until each district she accesses is saturated. Never before complete saturation. She calls her organization a start-up NGO but she has no interest in adopting the grow-at-any-cost ethos of a start-up. She wants Progression not mindless growth.

Sujana had always aspired to join the Civil Services. She wanted to make a difference in people's lives. But it was not to be. She didn't pass the exam. So instead, she began a devotion to people on the margins, the ones everyone forgot about such as hospital waste collectors in Delhi, leather workers in Pune and the sub-contractors to the sub-contractors to the vendors who manufactured clothing for large western brands in Chennai.

Unlike some of our other NGO founders, Sujana did not grow up knowing that she was going to teach farmers all about beekeeping. Instead, she grew up realizing that there was such a thing as 'action-oriented economics,' that could lead to significant changes in the lives of the people she was studying. She began studying Economics – not Industrial Economics as many of her peers were, but Agricultural and Rural Economics – maybe she did know that she wanted to teach farmers about beekeeping! After her Bachelor's degree, she went on to get a Masters in Agricultural Economics in Pune, followed by a second Master's in Economics of Education.



Each of Sujana's Master's degrees involved a research project. Each of these research projects veered toward livelihood creation. Each of her research projects ended up creating policy change and/or new rules for people trying to make a living. All in all, Sujana was on a path that she only saw when she turned back around to look at it. As she moved forward, she simply kept doing what she felt needed to be done. Her moves forward were driven by her husband's postings as a bank officer but that didn't slow her down.

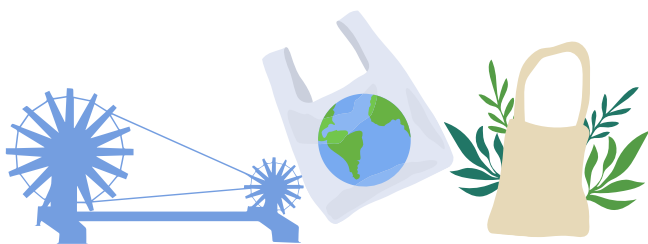
When her husband was posted to Shimla, Sujana joined an organization called PRIA – Participatory Research in Asia. She worked on helping women occupy the 30% of Panchayat seats that were mandated for them and trained these women to figure out what they needed in their villages and how to fight for what they needed. This experience taught her another useful skill – Innovative thinking, finding alternative paths to the same goal. She also learned all about Microplanning – the way to involve local people in decisions that affect their lives.

What Sujana was doing, step by step, bank posting by bank posting was accumulating knowledge and experience that would bring her to where she is today – running an organization that teaches farmers all about beekeeping. At first, this looked to be all about honey and local farmers in Palghar where she first began this work turned away in disbelief. They said they knew how to extract honey from hives. But even they admitted that the number of hives they could tap each year was reducing. This is when Sujana brought in her Microplanning skills coupled with a lot of innovative thinking. In working with a few farmers, she proved to the rest that Beekeeping was not just about honey. It was about pollination. The farmers who maintained the hives saw their mango production jump exponentially. The honey production was lower because these bees were indigenous and but they were familiar to the farmers and to the vegetation in the region.

In the end, or more like in the middle because the story continues, Sujana was not only able to improve the livelihood of farmers and give them an extra source of income, but she was also recognized for creating environmentally sustainable methods of farming and beekeeping.

Sujana wants to step down but is that really possible? She will only find yet another project, yet another way to put all her building blocks to good use, always adding to her collection at every stage of her life's work.





KNOW HOW  
FOUNDATION

Plastic, when it was first discovered in 1907 in Belgium and when it evolved into an industry in India in 1957, was considered a revolutionary material. Resilient and long lasting, it would save us cutting down forests for paper and add life to almost any every material, not to mention its industrial and medical uses. Until the late nineties, plastic retained its glowing image, small piles of thick bags tucked under the mattress of almost every Indian household. In the early 2000's plastic began to lose its sheen. Single use plastic use grew exponentially and the realization that plastic is not readily biodegradable dawned.

Amita joined the world in this realization when she was still quite young and while most people at the time heard this critical little nugget of information and forgot about it almost as soon as they had heard it, Amita kept it with her, returning to it time after time as she made her way through her academic life.

Amita Deshpande is a charming young woman on a mission. That her mission takes her into garbage dumps and roadside trash bins is part of her charm. Her understanding of plastic trash, where it goes, why ragpickers are not interested in it, and how long it takes to decompose would befuddle and most likely bore most of us. Her underlying objectives to save the environment and to provide livelihood to tribals and villagers without moving them to already crowded cities could be met in many other more savory ways. But this is her calling and she has responded by creating an enterprise that uses difficult to recycle solid waste and turning it into bags and accessories that everyone needs and uses every day.

Amita founded her company after a degree in Engineering, followed by several years in an IT organization and finally a Master's degree in Industrial Administration with a focus on Sustainable Development. She followed this degree with a job in Chicago working for a company that helped large enterprises realize their sustainability objectives and track them.

She realized that her passion for the environment and sustainability was fast becoming a global trend and she had a front seat for it in India. After her education and experience, she was well suited to consult for Indian companies that wanted to make CSR more than a checklist item with most of the money given to pet projects. She moved back to India, formed an organization called Arohana and worked with BAIF, a national level organization that focuses on social development.

Amita very closely imbibed BAIF's core mission – Not Mass Production but Production by the Masses – when she decided to put her interest in plastic waste and livelihood creation to the test. She transitioned her organization from a consulting firm into a manufacturing enterprise along with a business partner who was to be her compatriot, her co-founder, and her co-innovator. Unfortunately, it was not to be. As is the case with many partnerships, trouble in this one began early but too late to undo the company that had already been registered as a partnership and the roles and responsibilities that had been defined between the two. Amita realized that her partner was not able to carry his share of the load to her satisfaction. They also deviated on major strategic points. Eventually, the two parted ways but not after five years of strain.

Amita started again, this time naming the company ReCharkha, that included an intuitively designed symbol for recycling as the Charkha. There is no question that Amita has once again found her groove with ReCharkha, the set back of the broken partnership well behind her. Her resilience and doggedness in pursuing her stated objectives are remarkable given her privileged background and opportunities to pursue whatever career she wanted.





# iTEACH SCHOOLS

When you meet someone who is happy with his life, you know. When you meet someone who willingly admits to flaws and failures, to paths taken and forgotten, and accepts what's before him yet fights for more, you know you are meeting someone special. Soumya is content but not smug, mad busy yet organized, and proud yet not arrogant. He has achieved great success in what he has chosen to dedicate his life to, no matter how you may choose to measure success. For him success is the fact that he has figured out how to reach over 90% of his students with his methods when that number was less than 20% when he first went down this jungle path, that he has significantly improved employee retention and that he recognizes that he wasn't living the vision he has been teaching his students and has finally decided that he must.

Soumya began life in Pune with parents who relocated from Bihar and UP for jobs. He went to Bishops School in Camp and whatever else he might have learned there, he retained one thing – the need to be thorough. That doesn't just mean rote learning and following the path that appears before you and doing it well. It also means to veer off into the wilderness and survive and thrive. In Ferguson College, Soumya studied Engineering and set his sights on IIT. Here he mostly learned about the 50% of humans he had summarily avoided as a student at an all-boys school – women. He met his now wife Gauri at Ferguson College and they've been together since.

IIT didn't happen for Soumya but NIT Nagpur did. There is something to be said for being where you are supposed to be because an ultra-competitive environment like at the IITs may not have given Soumya a chance to sculpt out of himself the makings of a leader.

There are many amongst us who in seeking prestige have lost balance and self-esteem that to regain can take a lifetime. Evolving into a leader at this stage simply means gaining sufficient confidence to initiate activity, no matter the outcome, and no matter the support. Soumya began understanding the idea of entrepreneurship and the beginnings of the need for social impact. He created a photography club and a hiking club that to his surprise many joined simply because of his belief in those endeavors.

Soumya next journey took him to America, as a follower. He went along with his wife and got a second Master's degree in Engineering at Penn State which led to a job at Lutron, a lighting controls company. He was impressed with America and its predictable processes, day to day functioning just as it was the day before and the way it was going to be the next day. While at Lutron, he learned how a world class company operates, what it means to be non-hierarchical, to have an open door policy and to promote based on merit not tenure. He learned what it means to be thorough in a context that has real world ramifications, that has made Lutron the best in the world.

But while all this efficiency and well-oiled processes and systems impressed Soumya, there was something at the back of his mind that held him back from planting roots in the US. He believes it might be that he spent his childhood summer holidays in Jhansi, home of Rani Lakshmbai, Rani of Jhansi. Each year, the very next day after a long train journey to Jhansi, Soumya went to the Fort, the fort that the Rani fought for at age twenty two because a life as a vassal of the British was not palatable to her. Each year, Soumya heard the story and each year it seeped a little deeper into his conscience – so deep that years later, it pushed him back home in the form of a two year fellowship with Teach for India.



Soumya calls his tenure with Teach for India a Strategic Experiment, one that would allow him to get off the train to Silicon Valley and follow the jungle path for a bit. As it happens, he stayed on the less travelled path and founded iTeach soon after his tenure with Teach for India ended.

As much as Soumya talks about his accomplishments, he also looks at his failures as good friends that he must nurture and appreciate but at a distance, for he doesn't want them to come too close but he doesn't want to forget them either. He has realized that it's best to focus on what is most important and leave other things, else he is not able to do anything well. Very early in the founding of iTeach, he started the iTeach Fellowship, along the lines of Teach for India but had to close it down for lack of focus and inadequate preparation. He also realized that he had to hone his management skills and bring a lot of what he had seen practiced at Lutron into his schools to retain his teachers. From 50% churn in the first few years, he is now at a point where no one leaves. He has also brought in many of the practices he teaches his children into his own life in terms of health and physical fitness.

While Soumya is laser focused on the present, he leaves no opportunity to learn more, to grow more, to improve his schools, his students, and his own life. This constant effort to nurture relationships, to adamantly stick to rules about no work after work, and bring balance into his life has resulted in success that makes sense, that gives back as much as it takes. It also means that Soumya's role model is no longer Elon Musk. If he has another one, he has not told me – but he no longer needs one, I think.





# MAYA CARE FOUNDATION

Very few people can pull off earnest passion in a way that is sincere and endearing. And two people reflecting off each other, energizing each other, never talking over each other, who are married to each other is as rare as a rainbow in the desert. Manjiri and Abhay are that couple, and Maya Care is their child, one that they are quite clear they are only raising until it is old enough to fend for itself. The two are also very clear that this story, the Maya Care story, it is not about the two founders and Manjiri's parents who helped get them started. It is about the People With Disabilities that run the organization.

Manjiri and Abhay's story, for whatever they might say, it really is their story, is both gut wrenching and uplifting. They have written it deliberately and poignantly, with revisions, cuts and plot shifts that have taken it from a simple volunteer organization run by people with disabilities that coordinates visits to the elderly to run simple errands for them, into a national phenomenon that recognizes changes in the social scenario and adapts to them.

We can talk all about the challenges that old people face, that their children are unable to offer support, or that there aren't any children to offer support but the fact is that getting old sucks. It is an inevitable reality that will hit each and every one of us. Unfortunately, the response that Manjiri and Abhay have received from CSR departments and other institutional donors has been weak, with focus on more visible, perhaps more glamorous sectors where the beneficiaries have a louder, stronger voice. The soft voices are the ones that Maya Care has chosen to hear and both founders have committed themselves unequivocally and unstintingly to these.

Both Manjiri and Abhay come from middle class families. Both are well educated, well-travelled and very well employed. Both have been married before and both have one daughter each from their previous marriages. Both state very clearly that this is their life's work even though they both work full time and will never be able to devote all their time to Maya Care. But because of their professional experience, Manjiri's in the Leadership Training space and Abhay's in managing large, diverse development teams, they have been able to create an organization that hums and it hums with disabled people at the helm. They run Maya Care as any other organization, but one that has Training, Technology and Leadership at its core – the areas that they both have expertise in. Recently, they have taken their business skills to another level with the launch of Project Bindu, an initiative to provide People with Disabilities sustainable employment. They've set up a BPO that delivers multilingual helpdesk services to several companies and they've placed several of their well-trained people at Indigo Airlines.

When Maya Care hires People With Disabilities, they typically come with some basic education, absolutely no work experience and a terrific attitude. That is what Manjiri looks for and is able to find, buried under layers of self-doubt, low self-esteem, and societal disregard. Once she finds it, she brings it to the fore as only a specialist can do, bringing about a transformation that rides along with expectations to deliver excellence that is no different for the able bodied. And that is Manjiri's secret sauce.

What Manjiri and Abhay do, what they've often thought about walking away from and never been able to is not just another NGO that nurtures the egos and sentiments of donors and cares as little as possible for beneficiaries.

What they do is sacred. They weren't born this way. Neither was this an epiphany for either of them. It was a gradual realization of their purpose, something that happens to many but few act upon.

But what looks and drives like a Tesla now was once a bicycle built for two. Manjiri and Abhay funded Maya Care with their own salaries and still do, to a great extent. But things took a definite turn when they both lost their jobs at the same time, had to pay the mortgage on a new house and Manjiri had just started a two year degree course at Oxford. The two turned to the Indian community, not for donations but with homemade aam panna for sale along with whatever Indian artifacts they had in their home. That helped them pay salaries and turn the corner. But money was still short and the two turned to event management in their spare time, organizing thread ceremonies and anything else anyone wanted them to organize, doing all the work themselves but earning extra money to continue to pay salaries.

The thing about these two is that they have absorbed Maya Care and the people associated with it into themselves. Any thoughts of quitting, and they do flutter in from time to time, disappear quickly because both the people they help and the people they've hired to do the work can't make it on their own. They know that they are ones who've created the expectation but now they must fulfill it. There is no other way.





DNYANADA  
INSTITUTE OF  
FLOW PIPING  
TECHNOLOGY  
(DIFPT)

Plumbing is a part of all homes that is at once essential and invisible. All we see is the tap and the drain. The machinations that go on in the background to ensure that water runs freely both ways is the simplest element of plumbing. With high rises, pressure must be considered, storage, pumping and various other elements must be taken into account to ensure that a building runs efficiently. It is all this and more that Abhay Math and his partners considered when deciding on plumbing as the occupation they were going to train young rural men for. It is sufficiently skilled work that requires training but it is not so complex that most people cannot master it – if it is taught well. And that is what Abhay has resolved to do – teach not only the basics of plumbing but also the more advanced aspects and not just in theory but in a fully functional lab that provides hands on, experiential work that prepares these young men for immediate employment.

But this is not where the story begins, it is where the story has got to so far, with so much more to come. The story begins with Abhay's early life in the village, attending a Zila Parishad school till the 7th grade. He realized way back then that the education that young men got till the 12th was not sufficient to train them to make a living at anything. In the old days, it was possible to work at an oil press or a flour mill and make a living but today, with everything mechanized, these occupations are no longer available. Although cold pressed oil is quite fashionable now, it is more for the elite than for the masses.

After Abhay did his Engineering and joined the IT world, he got involved in that life till he met two colleagues who had the same idea as him – to do something for the rural youth to uplift their lives, to give them a livelihood that was not temporary but that would give them skills for life.

The three researched many areas, studied socio-economic surveys for Maharashtra, travelled to all corners of the state to understand migration patterns and the work young men found when they came to the city. Most ended up as day laborers or found other unskilled work. Most were out of work for long stretches of time, many came back to the village to no work.

Abhay and his senior mentors zeroed in on the construction industry which employed hundreds of people at various skill levels. They mapped 42 areas of work that goes on at a construction site. Even here, some areas require unskilled labor but many require skills, such as plumbing. They surveyed Pune builders to understand what skill they were missing the most. Qualified and trained plumbers was a critical requirement, they found out. Next, they identified a force in the plumbing industry and took his guidance. Finally, they reached out to the International Institute of Plumbing and got the international curriculum for training plumbers. Until this time, the three used their own money and in 2009 began their first class. It was not till 2016 that Abhay was able to quit his job and join the organization full time. Over the years, he lost both of his original partners, and continued the journey on his own.

Abhay has since aligned himself to the many young people he has trained over the years. They have become his family. He does not take a salary from his NGO, only compensation for expenses incurred. The same is true for his management team, many of them also retired IT professionals who have chosen to give back to the youth of this country.

Abhay's approach in starting and running his NGO has been methodical, deliberate, and well thought through.



He has studied and researched every step he has taken in the manner to which he is accustomed in the corporate world. He is pursuing a passion but in a very logical and rational way. Since the initial start, the NGO first received funding from Honeywell and later from many other CSR Departments. He needs regular infusion of funds because each student he enrolls is full time residential and costs Rs. 30,000 for the three month program. He charges students Rs. 6,500. The difference is made up by donations. This approach is also unique to Abhay, for the students who come in are poor, with limited funds. However, he recognizes well that anything free is never valued sufficiently – a nominal charge ensures that each student struggles a little to get the money and then sticks through the program in order not to waste the funds spent.

In creating this organization, Abhay has done his part in bringing about much needed change to an unorganized sector that hired untrained workers who did sub-standard work, ultimately impacting the home buyer and resulting in expensive rework. Abhay also ensures that only ethical contractors hire his trainees to ensure their safety and wellbeing. He holds a Placement Event at the end of each batch. Contractors have to issue an appointment letter with wages and overtime clearly defined, with accommodation that is clean and safe and with insurance and other safety protocols detailed.

Abhay is now creating Centers of Excellence in conjunction with plumbing manufacturers, ensuring cutting edge training to his students. He himself lives off his savings, has no dependents and relies on yoga, chanting and Bhagwad Gita readings to keep him grounded and always striving for more, not for himself but for the youth of rural India, an endeavor he has attached himself to in a way that he can never let go, never walk away from – for this what he is meant to do.





**CENTRE FOR  
YOUTH  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND ACTIVITIES  
(CYDA)**

There is something to be said for Service as a career option right from the start of one's career. Typically, young people are more inclined to establish themselves and then turn to the development sector as an epiphany or a lifelong dream. Matthew completed his education first in English Literature and later in Philosophy – unusual subjects for the first one in the family to go to college. But there is nothing ordinary about Matthew Mattam. The youngest of seven children in an agricultural household that was reasonably comfortable financially, Matthew grew up with no responsibilities and no burdens. His older siblings helped his parents in the fields, in the grocery, and in the kitchen, while he was free to play with his friends and run around unfettered. When it came to his education, he finished the 10th in his village school and would have joined his brothers and sisters in farm work but they didn't need him. He asked if he could study and was encouraged to go. That was the first time Matthew left Kerala, to go and study in Mysore.

In Mysore, Matthew studied English Literature but was very drawn to Philosophy. He was most interested in Western Philosophy and came to Pune to study further. Unfortunately, in Pune he was only able to study Indian Philosophy but he excelled and was hired as a professor at the Raja Ram College in Kohlapur. While there, Matthew saw the apathy among college students and their lack of interest in attending classes. He knew then, as he had done even in his younger days in Kerala that these young people needed guidance and direction. But he had not yet arrived at his own role in the life of youth. He left Raja Ram college and returned to academia to complete his MPhil, this time in Gandhian philosophy. When he finished in 1990, he joined Yuva in Mumbai and worked there till 1999, as a youth coordinator.

It is here that he realized that he was organizing youth and pushing them into a variety of movements, fighting for causes where numbers were required, but the young people he was rounding up were aimless. They had no idea what they were fighting for and why.

Finally, in 1999 Matthew left Yuva and founded the Center for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA). By this time, he was married and had a son. He thought he had a plan. He thought he had a strategy. But raising money for his initiative, which at that time was focused very simply on engaging youth and providing them life skills to begin building their futures, was impossible. His wife decided to go back to work to run the household. Matthew himself went from college to college asking for initiatives he could run, volunteers he could bring in to help him, support in any form. It wasn't until 2004 that he got his first project from Forbes Marshall. And there was no turning back from there.

CYDA is now twenty five years old, raises 9 crores annually and employs 80 staff. The organization will take on anything that can engage young people and provide meaning to their lives. That includes sports for the under-privileged, health and hygiene initiative such as a hand-washing program that they took out to over 5L children, providing rations and cooked food to migrants and poor communities during Covid and so much more.

Matthew acknowledges that the giving landscape is changing as are the rules. Each penny collected must be accounted for. Regulatory compliances alone require a full time person. Working with youth is also hard work. If you can't engage them, they will find something better to do.

But Matthew has always known that CYDA must adapt as needs change and as the priorities of young people change. He also knows that he has to keep looking for new funding sources as existing ones vanish for various reasons. One thing is certain, Matthew will remain in the development sector finding new ways and means to do what he does best, bringing out the best in young people.



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We are here to tell you the story of each of these incredible organizations, the complete story that we hope you will be able to grasp with all your senses.



**Priya Hajela** is a fiction writer from Pune. Writing is a second career for her. She graduated with an MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College in Vermont on July 2nd 2017.

Prior to taking to writing about five years ago, Priya worked in a variety of telecom and IT organizations in marketing and business development roles. She began her career after an MBA from Vanderbilt University in 1992.

Priya lives with her husband and two small dogs. Her son writes for the Raleigh News and Observer and her daughter is a senior at United World College, Costa Rica.

Two short stories from Priya's first collection have been published in a New Delhi based e-magazine called Earthen Lamp Journal. A third has been published in an online journal called Indian Ruminations. Ladies' Tailor is her first book.

