

Thinking Social Seminar - Pune

The second “Thinking Social” seminar series, organized by IIM Calcutta Innovation Park (IIP), was held on November 29th 2014 at Pune, with Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication (Pune), a constituent institute under Symbiosis International University as the host Institution under the aegis of Tata Social Enterprise Challenge (TSEC). As the main objective of these TSEC “Thinking Social” seminars is to connect youth to social enterprise it was very heartening to see a strong student presence at the TSEC “Thinking Social” seminar in Pune.

The speakers for the day comprised eminent entrepreneurs, who have established their own outstanding ventures in the Indian social entrepreneurship space and sought to address the concerns of young, budding entrepreneurs. The speakers shared their immense knowledge on social entrepreneurship with around 200 strong audience representing the students, academia and NGOs/ institutions.

At the inaugural session, Mr. Chandradeep Mitra, who is advisor to IIM-Calcutta’s Innovation Park, while outlining the structure of the Innovation Park also discussed how its functions span across social issues and focus on healthcare, livelihood, education and green energy as the core areas. Prof. Chandan Chatterjee, Director, SIMC, emphasized that social entrepreneurship or socially conscious businesses have now become the need of the hour and quarterly profits as key performance indicators for a business only exhibits its short sightedness. Dr. Shubhro Sen, Director, Tata Management Training Centre introduced the audience to the various philanthropic activities of the Tata Group, touching upon how the majority of the shares of this group was held by various philanthropic trusts of the Tata Group.

Moving on to the technical session, Ms. Sunanda Mane, co-founder & President, Lend-A-Hand India introduced the audience to a practitioner’s view point on the concept of social entrepreneurship and discussed the objectives that led her to set up Lend-A-Hand . She also talked about the various trials and tribulations that she had faced so far in her journey and emphasized on the importance of pre-planning before starting a new venture.

Presenting a macro level view on Social Entrepreneurship, Dr. ShubhroSen, Director, Tata Management Training Centre said, “The world has moved from the cultural age of ‘me’ to ‘we’.” He also said “the beauty of entrepreneurship is that you can paint your own canvas”. He suggested that as a social entrepreneur it is important that “you do not lose sight of what drives you”.

Mr. Vimlendu Jha, Founder and Executive Director, Swechha We for Change, made a passionate appeal to the young people - “Social entrepreneurship should not be an accidental choice. We want you to make the choice now and not five years later. Organizations like IIM-Calcutta and SIMC should come together and be a hub for this energy”.

Mr. Swapnil Chaturvedi, Founder, Samagra, said “running a business is a marathon and not a sprint.” He told the students “to be a social entrepreneur figure out your ‘why’ and understand your ‘purpose’.

Dr. Suneeta Kulkarni, Research Director, School in the Cloud and Prof. Prasanna Hulikavi, Deputy Director, SIMC, Pune highlighted social experiments like 'The Hole in The Wall' and 'The Granny Cloud', initiatives that helped reach out to children in slums and provide them with quality education through the means of technology.

Concluding on a high note, the TSEC "Thinking Social" seminar left the audience inspired by the various stories of change and impact, created in society by the speakers for the day. "It was an eye-opening experience and is a definite source of inspiration and call for action to the youth of today," said Anuradha Goulay, a student of SIMC, Pune about her experience at TSEC "Thinking Social".

The common sentiments echoed by social entrepreneurs both in the first and the second TSEC "Thinking Social" seminar include:

- It is important to work with the government if you want to bring about a large scale impact, especially in the vast rural areas.
- All people who have become social entrepreneurs or are aspiring to become one are usually bitten by the bug to bring about a systemic change in the society
- Do not underestimate the rural folk. They are smart.
- Be true to your cause. Zero in on what appeals most to you and filter out the rest.
- Before starting an enterprise preplan. Forethought and adequate preplanning is important for sustainability.