

PHILANTHROPY

Deval Sanghavi

Non-profit worker with Dasra
Nationality: American

"I was born and brought up in US but I returned often to India because of relatives. In 1996, I volunteered for a children's project at Grant Road station organised by the Community Outreach Programme. Back then, I was working at Morgan Stanley. In the first year, I realised that though I enjoyed work, I enjoyed social work more. I kept thinking, why don't I bring in the rigorous discipline that I learned at the investment bank to the non-profit sector? So I decided to form Dasra, which helps non-governmental organisations improve their effectiveness by helping them identify their challenges and addressing them jointly.

In India, I think we are fortunate to have individuals who take matters into their own hands. It is unlike the West, where every one sits back and blames the government for the issues and few people take the initiative to create something on their own. We are fortunate in the sense that Indians have given up on government. They realise that a change needs to happen and they take it upon themselves.

Here, people donate money but they give to someone they can see and touch. In the US, donors have come to the realisation that they have full-time jobs and they may not have the expertise to solve some of the state's largest issues. They are more willing to donate to

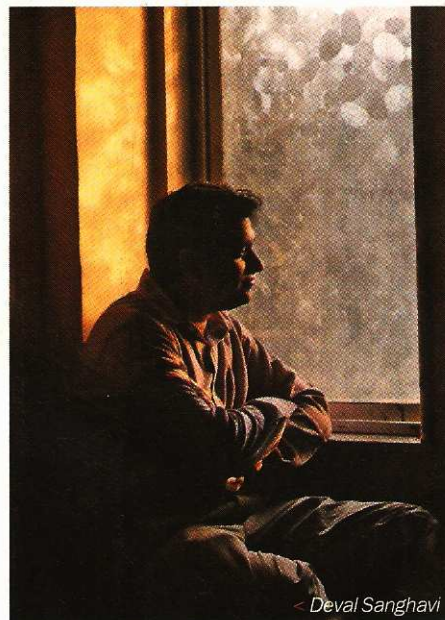
organisations that have proven themselves.

I have noticed that there is this negative attitude towards the non-profit sector: why would any sane individual get into social work unless she is getting something in return? One of the bigger obstacles is a perception that people who get into social work have scored low in their schools or couldn't get into science or commerce. So it becomes difficult for non-profits to find dedicated and passionate individuals. The top business schools in America or even in UK have strong social entrepreneurship programmes, where students actually intern with non-profits in the summer. We have hired so many people who are like, "I can't tell my parents because then I won't get married", or "I can't tell my bride-to-be because then they will say I am part of a social work organisation."

Over the last nine years, there are signs of change in the social sector. A stark difference between India and the developed world is that people in India try new ideas to alleviate

'Western B-schools have strong social entrepreneurship programmes.'

poverty. Funding has picked up over the last couple of years, but there is still the belief that donors are doing a favour for the non-profit. When people go into these organisations, they automatically start questioning the way the organisation works. The ultimate aim of an NGO is to shut down. It should be: we improved the problem or made the change. Here you can't do that, its going to be years for us to do that." *As told to Suhani Singh*



Deval Sanghavi