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PROFILE OF P.N. LASHMANAN

Putting service before self is not everybody's cup of tea. A change agent has to be part of change and show the way. Mr. P. N. Lashmanan belongs to such a rare species of people who are driven by the spirit of selfless service. Mr. P. N. Lashmanan is an entrepreneur of a manufacturing company named "Right Castings India" based in Coimbatore. He is also a social activist and the President of Sacrifice Friends Club, Coimbatore. Mr. Lashmanan is a man of action and not man of words. This 34 year old bachelor switches his life time between running his company 'Right Casting India' and social service.

It all started on a dawn of February 1997 when Coimbatore city was turned upside down by the worst bomb blast of the city's history. He gathered thousands of youths and set up 'Sacrifice Friends Club' which helped the victims of the incident to recover.

Mr. Lashmanan adopted almost 76 slums in Coimbatore. He is making sure all the youth in the adopted slums are going to schools or colleges. He believes that when youth are not educated, they will end up as anti-social elements. To prevent that, he is trying to educate them all and eradicate the social weeds.

His service does not stop with educating them, he is also employing some of them in his own company and referring to other organizations as well, thereby giving life to the whole family not just an individual.

Mr. Lashmanan says his father is his role model, who was a group I officer in government of Tamilnadu. During the service, his father served the society by providing employment and funding for education and other charitable activities. By seeing his father, Mr. Lashmanan was inspired and became a social activist. He also says “Service starts at home”. He grew up in a home where service to the needy was done like a daily ritual. He fondly recalls his grandmother telling stories, which he thinks is another factor that molded his character. Thus the early upbringing and the family tradition had a strong influence on his personality.

Mr. Lashmanan took part in providing relief to the victims of Gujarat earthquake for 15 days, when he was a school student. He also headed a team of volunteers and took care of victims of Tsunami in Kulachal village, Kanyakumari. He brought tears in everyone’s eyes when he proudly recalls a miracle that happened during the relief work. They found a mother and a child alive in the debris five days post Tsunami. He also created an orphanage for 46 children orphaned because of Tsunami and he still visits there to monitor the functioning.

Mr. Lashmanan mobilized 5000-10000 youths at the time of Kargil War and took them to war front to carry ammunitions to the site of war which is located at a mountain cliff. He recalls it as a memorable day in his life as social activist.

Whenever Mr. Lashmanan learns about natural calamity anywhere in India, he heads there. His team did not miss the recent Uttarakhand disaster either. His team was there in the spot without nobody’s call or asking. He says “You shouldn’t point fingers at others; it should be pointed towards you. Don’t pass the bug on to others. You should take initiative. That is the leadership quality”. He shared about the happy moment when they brought back 400 affected people to Tamilnadu from Uttarakhand, after strenuous effort and high risk operation.

Apart from taking part in disaster relief, he is also educating 46 children and training the youths to be placed in better employment opportunities. He proudly shares that one of the student educated by him is in a good position in Wipro Technologies. He also initiated a project called “Maghalir Maruvazhvu” in which he adopted children of young widows and train them to be self-employed.

He also initiated a project called “Jeeva Jothi”, through which awareness about eye transplantaion to the kids less than 16 years of age, with partial eye sight is created. Such

visually challenged can get 100% eye sight if treatment is given by 16 years of age. Through that project, Mr. Lashmanan arranged eye transplant to 127 children in South India.

The service of his team is not confined to his own organization or one region; but is made available to anyone in need of help. He gave more than 270 artificial limbs to the affected people and he also trained them for employment.

During his tenure as youth member in planning commission, Mr. Lashmanan fought for reduction of fees in government colleges. His team is also involved in “Save a Girl Child” project. Objective of this project is to create awareness about the declining female girls’ population and the consequent imbalance in the gender ratio will lead to several social problems. As a first initiative of ‘save a girl child’ project, he invested Rs.18000 for any girl child born in slums. The girl child will get 2.5 lakhs at the age of 18 which she can use it either for education or marriage. This initiative was created 3 years before and as of now 75 girl children were benefitted from this.

Mr. Lashmanan is not collecting funds from anyone for any project. He is doing things on his own strength based on his affordability as an entrepreneur. Mr. Lashmanan had a chance to meet with Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam who advised “Don’t be an employee, be an entrepreneur”. Mr. Lashmanan got inspired by Dr. Kalam’s words and following that ever since.

Mr. Lashmanan is highly self-confident. He proudly says “One thing that no one can take away from me is my confidence. If you want to win, you can win. To win, you need to dream as told by Dr. Kalam. Thoughts are too strong as quoted by M.S. Udhayamoorthy in his Tamil book titled ‘Ennangal’. If you stick on to your thoughts, you can reach your destination.

Last but not least, Mr. Lashmanan shared the inspirational mantra which his father gave to him: “Think good, do good, always good things will happen to you”. These are the three principles, says Mr. Lakshmanan that he follows in his life. At last he says, “*What I’m today is because of these three principles. Keep on doing good, you’ll definitely win in your life*”.

By holding on steadfastly to the two great virtues, “*leading by example*” and “*being the change*”, Mr. Lashmanan is a role model for any social entrepreneur or social activist.

(Based on the interview Mrs. N. Bhuvaneshwari, Assistant Professor, Vivekananda Institute of Management Studies had with Mr. P.N. Lakshmanan)