



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

NATURAL FARMING: WAY TO BE A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

KEY WORDS: Social Entrepreneur, dairy farming, Natural farming, agriculture

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ABSTRACT

A Social Entrepreneur by work, Mr. Devendra Satalkar, ventured with his dream project "Dhara Naturals'" reflecting his belief in nature and its productive capacity. He was always opposed to farming done with the help of fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, hybrid seeds and industry dependent agricultural. Mr. Devendra Satalkar a techno graduate started with dairy farming in year and later shifted to natural agro farming. This stemmed from his belief that things grow naturally best when they are far from human intervention. He started with an investment of 4 acres of land which was uneven in topography and grew to around 12 acres of land. The land was used for growing different types of fruits such as chickoo, blackberry pomegranate, lemon, custard apples, along with drumsticks, curry leaves, lemon grass. Because of increasing awareness of the people towards natural product his customer base increased from 4-5 customers to 100 customers per month. In order to create value and make his venture more sustainable he added innovation to his efforts. Mr. Satalkar introduced many new products to his business like drumstick leaf powder, ginger salt powder, garlic salt powder etc. and various other products mix which encouraged responses from his customers. He carved a niche for himself in the business of organic and natural products. His future strategy is to work on sustainable growth by increasing the awareness among the society about natural farming and create a business which complements the nature and society at large.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Devendra Satalkar is a social agro entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurs combine commerce and social issues in a way that improves the lives of people connected to the cause. They don't measure their success in terms of profit alone – success to social entrepreneurs means that they have improved the world. According to **Nicholls (2006)**, the term "social entrepreneur" was first introduced in 1972 by banks, who noted that social problems could also be deployed by managerial practices. Mr. Devendra Satalkar in his venture was committed to solve a social problem by improving the lives of people through emphasis on natural farming. He as a person is completely ethically driven in his venture. According to the **Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship**, social entrepreneurs share several characteristics which are very much in line with Mr. Satalkar's venture to achieve a large scale social change by focussing on the social or ecological change they want to make while earning money. Social entrepreneurs typically address areas of unsatisfied social needs or the creation of new social opportunities that the public or private sectors have failed to address (**Corner and Ho, 2010**). Mr. Satalkar following these characteristics and dream, quit his job in the IT field to pursue his calling in the field of dairy and agriculture. Mr. Satalkar aptly name his entrepreneurial venture "Dhara Naturals" reflecting his belief in nature and its productive capacity as opposed to farming done with the help of fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides hybrid seeds and industry dependent agriculture. Social entrepreneurship activities have far reaching economic effects like enhancing growth, reducing poverty and improving large-scale social development by offering solutions to social problems.

(**Yunus and Weber, 2008; Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum and Shulman, 2009**).

Mr. Satalkar initially started with dairy farming along with low investment of Rs. 4 lakhs by buying 4 Cows and 3 Buffaloes. He had no prior experience of setting up of a dairy. As he did not have any land of his own, he operated from a rented space. Having no prior knowledge about the business and its nuances their only source of information was conversation with stores providing animal feeds. The dairy business grew from 4 cows to around 75 - 80 cows within ten years. The main revenue generating product was milk and ghee with around sale of 500 – 600 liters of milk per

day. However the dairy business was not too cost effective. Secondly Mr. Satalkar being a man of ethics and values was also vehemently opposed to the idea of injecting "Oxytocin" into the cattle for more production of milk. "Oxytocin" is a cancer causing chemical which also passes on to the milk extracted from cows. It is thus not only harmful to cattle but also to those who consume that milk. Mr. Satalkar was also against adding water to milk to increase the volume and insisted on selling milk in its pure form. All this made dairy business unviable as the profits generated were not enough to make it sustainable. The govt. policies and price setting forums made things more difficult to confine the milk prices at a low level. Buying fodders to feed the cows in all seasons including no – lactation season when the cows didn't give milk increased the cost because of which Mr. Satalkar could not scale up his business.

Journey from Dairy farming to Natural farming

Mr. Satalkar while in dairy business was constantly motivated to move into agriculture business. He simultaneously started his research in the field of vegan based natural farming which he calls as 'Do nothing farming'. This stemmed from his belief that things grow naturally best when they are far from human intervention. Everything in nature is useful and serves a purpose in the web of life. Natural farming is the only agricultural practice that has no side effects. It is the best practice for farmers, soil and environment as well (**Subhash Palekar, 2018**). The essence of natural farming is minimizing the external inputs to the farm land, which degenerate the soil nature. Natural farming philosophy is working with nature to produce healthy food, to keep ourselves healthy, and to keep the land healthy. Growth of the covering plants like white clover holds back weeds effectively. Growth of covering crops like legumes increases the nitrogen fixation in the soil (**Zaheer shah et al**). In this way natural farming increases the soil productivity naturally. With this philosophy Mr. Satalkar started with an investment of 4 acres of land which was uneven in topography and which later grew to around 12 acres of land. He bought uneven land at economic price but using his entrepreneurial intellect he started multi-farming on it. The unevenness of land was used for growing different types of fruits such as chickoo, blackberry pomegranate, lemon, custard apples, along with drumsticks, curry leaves, lemon grass.

The main ideology which he wanted to pursue was to provide pure

nutritious food to his family at a price which he would otherwise have spent on buying unnatural and inorganic food for the same price from market. He also diversified his natural farm agro products into processed food by starting an industry at home which included around 125 products grown out of natural farming. This helped to create value and making his venture more sustainable. Adding innovation to his efforts, Mr. Satalkar introduced many new products to his business like drumstick leaf powder, ginger salt powder, garlic salt powder etc. and various other products mixes which were of high nutrient value. It created high demand and encouraging responses from his customers. This further added value to his business and helped him to carve a niche in the business of natural products. His main customers include people with belief in natural, pure and nutritious products. Through his unique but limited marketing efforts like selling his product through a platform called "Jaivik Setu" and word of mouth publicity he rests his convictions on the fact that his business will grow in a slow but steady way. Because of increasing awareness of the people towards natural product his customer base has increased from mere 4 customers to 100 customers per month.

He is opposed to the government policy of propagating GM seeds and fertilizers. **Subhash Palekar, (2018)** revealed that Centre is extending subsidies to the tune of Rs. 80,000 crore to agriculture, which is 14 per cent of the national budget. "Most of this amount is being spent on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. By application of chemical fertilizers, not only are we wasting money, but also causing damage to the soil health. As a social entrepreneur Mr. Satalkar is also pained with poor knowledge and wrong agricultural policy which will ruin the soil and food quality in future. The dependency of agriculture and farmers on seed industries and fertilizers industry is not conducive for the farmers in a long run. People who consume these plant products are at risk of adverse health effects. Cadmium and lead are the elements of major concern due to their accumulation potential and toxic effects in the plants and animals (**Wolnik KA, 1983**). He is resentful of farmers approaching the wholesale nearby market to sell their produce at throw away rates. He also feels that farmer should produce their own seeds for sowing in the next season. Natural farming differs from Organic farming by not using any organic manure like FYM (Farm Yard Manure) and vermi-compost.

Dhara's natural products are comparatively sold at premium prices as compared to other products. Natural farming takes its own time and therefore the health gains from such product are much more natural and healthier in relation to other. He is of the opinion that people should also realize and acknowledge this fact regarding the difference in pricing. **Kamal et al. (2009)** revealed from his study, consumption of organic products is increasing; however, product development and innovations in certification, processing, labelling and packaging are needed to further stimulate demand. Further he stated that 39% of the respondents feel the extra cost for organic food products is reasonable. As an entrepreneur with a social inclination, natural farming has become a way of life for Mr. Satalkar through which he seeks to benefit his family and society and mother earth at large. Satisfied with his agro operation both in terms of revenue and marketing he has tried to create goodwill about Dhara's Products to a select set of customers which he believes is an important asset in taking his business a long way in future.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the difference between social entrepreneur, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise?
2. A social entrepreneur and a business entrepreneur pursue different objectives. Do you agree with the statement? Differentiate between the two in the light of the above statement.
3. What traits as a social entrepreneur can be observed in Mr. Devendra Satalkar?
4. Is Mr. Satalkar able to develop a marketable product?
5. As an entrepreneur has Mr. Satalkar scaled up his enterprise?
6. As a marketing manager, give your suggestion as to what kind

of ethical marketing measures should Dhara's Naturals adopt and follow?

7. Can social entrepreneurship ensure sustainability?

TEACHING NOTES

Objectives of the Case

1. Make the participant acquainted with the concept of social entrepreneurship.
2. To help students get an insight in to characteristics and competences of successful social entrepreneur.
3. To understand the implication and realize one's potential by identifying the opportunities to pursue dreams

Key Issues

1. To understand significance of social entrepreneurial skills.
2. Key issues involved are growth and innovation in natural farming and recent developments.

Teaching approach and strategy

1. The case may first be analyzed at the individual level and then may be discussed at a group level. The recommended group size is 4-6 members.
2. Participants may be asked to prepare a write up on challenges associated with natural farming and dairy farming.
3. Participants have to provide innovative ideas of how to market natural farm products.
4. Discussants can refer to standard texts on entrepreneurship, social entrepreneur, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

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