The Relevance of Appreciative Inquiry
In the context of Social Change, Social Research,
Social Work and Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: *While life majorly centers on problem solving, problem solving skills are honed and imbibed from the day one is born, so to say. Many a time, the solution is in the problem itself and the person facing the problem can solve the problem himself, if he is provided the right tools and equipped with the right skills. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is another approach that seeks to solve the problem by motivating the participants (or, stakeholders) and affected parties themselves to introspect, seek change and solve it by self-analysis and correction in a positive way. This paper is a collation of the application of random thoughts based on preliminary observations and analysis of completed work in retrospect. It is application of the theory of Appreciative Inquiry to its actual practice in social work and social entrepreneurship, social research and social change. In developing countries and underdeveloped countries, AI is a useful tool that can motivate the rural poor to reform themselves and lift them out of poverty. Cohesiveness and cooperation among the villagers and harmony brings about positive impact towards sustainable development and growth. This is an add-on to the policies and injections and inducements that governments provide. The tool of appreciative inquiry is a tool that results in positive outcomes and learning. It has to be applied in various avenues, wherever the human element is an input, which is again why AI is required.*

1. Author Speak

Prof Suryakumari Duggirala: In my banking and teaching career, (in economics and corporate communication at some of the leading b-schools), I have studied management concepts. When I started my company in training, I studied about Appreciative Inquiry and implemented this concept into several training modules, more so in employee engagement workshops. Appreciative Paradigm is another exercise that I conduct frequently where each participant writes all those things that he admires, appreciates in the other person. It has had a positive impact on the participants' feeling appreciated and motivated to work better. This tool has been very useful in the stress management workshops that I conduct for high school children and their parents and teachers.

Dr Vinayak Deshpande: While researching for a case study I was reading about participatory mapping. Here, the villagers are able to inform the scientists or development researchers about the location of houses and village resources. They identify resources like land, soil types, forest, land use, productivity, irrigation etc This is done simply by drawing on the ground by hand with a stick, colored chalk. A farmer used this method to map the command area of an irrigation tank in Kolar district. It showed clearly and accurately the different paths, shapes and sizes according to layout, ownership and survey number. In another study, (Neela, 2001) various definitions of rural poverty emerged from the villagers. The parameters they regarded were matched with policy framework and the gaps identified. Village communities, regional and local government and service delivery and rural development agencies, each have different objectives with regard to community participation. I found this method was possible only by the inherent and implicit application of the tool of Appreciative Inquiry.

Prof Sneha Deshpande: I have seen some of the case studies demonstrated by NGOs functioning in India on youtube. These case studies and success stories can be incorporated. I go by Dr Abdul Kalam's words, "Do not read success stories, you will get only message. Read failure stories, you will get some ideas to get success!" The MFI, Madura Microfinance Ltd, Trichy, India has made a video of actual mistakes and errors which lead to failure of start-ups and shows it regularly to the SHGs, so that they don't committ such mistakes.

This is also another application of Appreciative Inquiry wherein the MFI cautions the beneficiary proactively and makes them see actually what happened with some of their colleagues.

2. Purpose of Research

The purpose of research is primarily to understand a problem in order to provide solutions to it. The problem maybe generic or specific, geographically varying and pertaining to any dimension of the human being and/or systems, organizations or countries or a global one. But the premise and commonality of any research is to solve a problem. (Excluding exploratory research and periodic research towards maintaining census and statistics).

3. Problem Solving

While life majorly centers on problem solving, problem solving skills are honed and imbibed from the day one is born, so to say. Taking a broader perspective, the world's bigger problems of poverty and hunger have been challenging mankind and governments over the years having been trying to solve the problem. Setting up of Millennium Goals, assigning tasks and deadlines to countries, liberalizing economies, countries working together, subsidizing the essential commodities or the resources required to produce the essentials, opening up the banking sector, social work and social entrepreneurship have all been solutions at various forums over the years. Many a time, the solution is in the problem itself and the person facing the problem can solve the problem himself, if he is provided the right tools and equipped with the right skills.

Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; show him how to catch fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.

4. A note on Appreciative Inquiry

Most problems are addressed with the motive of 'problem-solving' approach of providing a solution. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is another approach that seeks to solve the problem by motivating the participants (or, stakeholders) and affected parties themselves to introspect, seek change and solve it themselves by self-analysis and correction in a positive way.

David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastava, the creators of the AI Model have opined that the problem can be solved by appreciating and valuing "the best of what is", envisioning what might be, engaging in dialogue about what should be and innovating what will be. It attempts to ask questions towards change and foster positive relationships. At the work place, it envisages to build or rebuild around what works, rather than try to fix what doesn't. Hence this model is the opposite of problem solving. This model is an attempt to bring strategic change and is applicable in businesses, healthcare bodies, social non-profit organizations, educational institutions and government organizations.

Table 1 Comparison of Problem Solving and Appreciative Inquiry

Problem Solving	Appreciative inquiry
A requirement leads to identification of problem(s)	Introspect and appreciate given resources
Cause and Effect analysis	Envisage the outcome
Analyse possible solutions	Interact and try to solve with available resources
Put to action by choosing from what is available and possible	Innovate a solution

Source:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative_inquiry

Appreciative inquiry uses the 'ask questions' methodology towards positive relationships by building on the strengths of the given human resources and the organization or a situation. The simplest and commonly used model of appreciative inquiry uses a 4-cycle processes:

1. Discover Stage where there is an identification of what works best in the existing scenario.
2. Dream Stage where participants envisage and visualize the future if they implement what they have discovered.
3. Design Stage where the participants plan a strategy that would work and prioritizing tasks take place.
4. Deploy (Destiny) Stage where the participants implement what they planned and proposed.

AI is based on five principles:

a) The constructionist principle proposes that thought and action is based on what one believes is true and it emerges from relationships. The purpose of inquiry is to stimulate new ideas and generate new possibilities for action.

b) The simultaneity principle proposes that since social systems move in the direction of questions, one should ask questions such a way that we can change them and bring in change.

c) The Poetic principle proposes that one chooses the right words and topics while asking questions, as this will definitely influence and bring out the best in people.

d) The Anticipatory principle proposes that inquiry create positive imagery to refashion anticipatory reality. Expectation is always a mobilizing agent.

e) The Positive principle proposes that inquiry should bring in positive affect and social bonding. Sentiments like hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie and joy increase creativity, openness to new ideas and people, and cognitive flexibility.

In this paper, an attempt is made to trace the effect of the principle of appreciative inquiry in research, in social work, social change and in social entrepreneurship. Although AI says its model is the opposite of problem solving, I can safely say that AI is a methodology to solving the problem by introspection and positive inquiry instead of providing a solution.

This paper is a collation of the application of random thoughts based on preliminary observations and analysis of completed work in retrospect. It is application of the theory of Appreciative Inquiry to its actual practice in social work and social entrepreneurship. The relevance, credibility and validity of the following analogy thus rests on the proof that is evident rather than on any statistical analysis derived and contrived for the sake of making an analogy 'technically strong'. The reader has the prerogative of choice to accept or not.

There are several instances that prove the role of appreciative inquiry, three of which I will share below:

- Research: Centre for Microfinance, Chennai, India
- Social Cause: Micro Finance and NGO-Hand-in-Hand and Madura Microfinance, Tamil Nadu, India
- Social Entrepreneurship: Dr M.V.Gupta, the pioneer of Blue Revolution

The paper proposes to conclude by discussing Participatory Community Empowerment methodologies that use Appreciative Inquiry in involving villagers in underdeveloped and developing countries. It will

5. Centre for Micro Finance, Chennai, India

Centre for Microfinance, a research and policy advocacy agency has been providing insights through its robust research, policy advocacy and dissemination of knowledge. Financial Inclusion, Policy and Regulations, livelihoods and social objectives are four key areas that CMF actively engages in conducting qualitative and quantitative researches.

CMF [5] has partnered with many investors, MF institutions and banks. Additionally, it has partnered
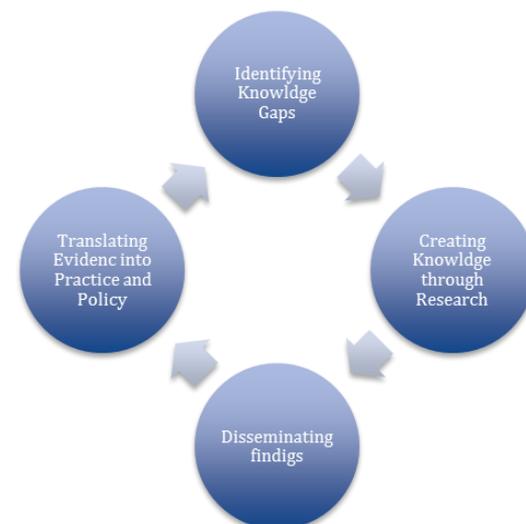

Figure 1 Objectives of CMF

with academic institutions in India and abroad. Some of them are MIT, University of Hyderabad, Duke, IIM Kolkata, Yale and IBS Hyderabad.

International Organizations like Ford Foundation, USAID and AusAID are funding CMF and helping it achieve its mission. NABARD's Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD) also funds CMF.

CMF has division with professionals who are responsible for outreach, impact evaluation and policy research. Two of the divisions, viz., and outreach and policy research ideate and conduct study that relates to policy change and other areas that comes in the domain of micro-finance and banking.

CMF aims at achieving the following:

- Nurturing knowledge partnerships amongst microfinance organizations and research scholars and thereby promote research-practice discourses
- Reaching out to scholars interested in the area of microfinance research and building their capacity.
- Networking of microfinance researchers from the country to build a sector-wise knowledge base.

In order to enable Indian researchers engage in microfinance arena, the CMF's flagship capacity development initiative conducts regular training. It not only organizes seminars, workshops and exposure visits, candidates are also given funding and international network opportunities. The researchers are trained to ask the right questions and are also sensitized with regard to the Study that they will conduct.

Around half of CMF's studies are randomized controlled trial (RCT) investigations of social development program. From assessing the effect of urban microcredit development to testing whether horticultural guidance conveyed through mobile devices can enhance rural farming practice, CMF's RCT studies are central to its research corpus.

It also seamlessly consults with its academic research partners globally with Institutions like Harvard University, London School of Economics,

IIM-Calcutta (India), Yale University and Pennsylvania. Additionally, CMF engages to garner field knowledge through its partners. Top social development organizations like SEWA, Bandhan, Kshetriya Grameen Financial Services and Development Support Center are some of the organizations. The World Bank, USAID, DFID, 3ie and the Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative financially support all these work.

5.1 Outreach and Impact

Every year in January, the Center co-supports a meeting with the College of Agricultural Banking – Reserve Bank of India in Pune titled "Microfinance: Translating Research into Practice," where policymakers, professionals and analysts assemble to talk about how projects and administrations can be intended to better serve poor

people. Analysts and individuals from CMF's Policy and Outreach group likewise meet routinely with industry masters and

government authorities to present research and examine matters of concern. CMF has made considerable progress since its establishment in 2005, both in terms of research and policy related communications.

CMF's work is often referenced in national and international journals and forums (Prof Suryakumari Duggirala, Dr V S Deshpande, 2016). And, has substantially contributed towards 'food for thought' at international forum wherever the idea of customizing financial services for the poor has been discussed and planned.

In the course of last 5 years, the Centre's professional and support team has produced a volume of work in the area of financial access which will have an pivotal role in providing researchers and policy makers with knowledge that will ultimately fuel the national poverty alleviation schemes and other social interventions targeted at the low-income households.

5.2 CMF and AI

CMF has been in the field of proactive research for more than a decade. By analyzing their various studies, it is evident that they incorporate the technique of Appreciative Inquiry, albeit unknown to themselves. Some of the studies that they have undertaken start with the constructionist principle of proactive reckoning as to how to improve a situation. During the process of research, they have made changes in the way they ask or get information, if the initial findings warrant it. This is the principle of simultaneity. In certain studies, especially the randomized trials, they pose their queries to elicit the best possible information from the respondents, the poetic principle. In the case of microfinance and women beneficiaries, they have controlled conditions for a group and interface it with the non-controlled groups, which is the anticipatory principle. Their research findings are poised toward bringing about better lives for the participants in the Study as well as influence policy-makers and decision-makers in the banking sector and/or government for better and more effective policies, which fits the positive principle.

Appreciative Inquiry has a high impact in research and in collection of primary data. Mere collection of data is one aspect but if collected with a positive approach, the results would be better. Although it is said that collection of data has to be non-biased and neutral, keeping in mind the factors of not influencing the opinion and not going for a

desired result, one can still elicit effective responses when the principles of appreciative inquiry are used.

6. Micro Finance Institutes (MFIs)

Microfinance primarily comprises of providing financial services to low income groups including individual customers and self-employed, who typically lack access to banking and related services. Broadly speaking, Microfinance is a movement whose purpose is a 'world in which as many poor and near-poor households as possible have access to an appropriate range of high quality financial services, including not just credit but also savings, insurance and fund transfers. The sole purpose here is poverty alleviation.

Micro-finance means transactions in small amounts of financing either by way of credit or savings for small businesses and medium scale producers. The poor, who cannot run a small business also stand to benefit as otherwise they were unable to earlier due to lack of finances. The poor, especially poor women are the prime reason for micro-finance intervention in many countries, including Bangladesh. Microfinance has proven to be an effective and powerful tool for poverty reduction. Micro Finance is relatively inexpensive and practical to use.

Microfinance is a useful tool for the poor in that they are provided with financial access in many countries. They are also provided with other help by way of training and organizational help during any crises.

Micro-finance organizations can alleviate liquidity constraints, stabilize consumption, and enhance both income and consumption for the poor, thereby augmenting the poor's welfare. It is a self-help when one borrows from a microfinance unit. Moreover, micro-finance satisfies the derived demand for capital in the resource-poor households, income, consumption, and employment impacts are the immediate effects of the interventions by way of microfinance.

Zero collateral and group based lending has been a strategy that has mitigated the problems of the poor as regards access to finance. The high costs of loan defaults also have ben reduced.

6.1 MFIs and SHGs

A Self-Help Group (SHG) is a voluntary association of economically deprived rural people, usually from the same geographical and socio-economic background. They generally are a group of 15-20 people living in the same village and the same locality. They form this group to avail financial benefits from a bank, MFI, NGO or any NBFC and are bound to each other due to this. They are self-governed and peer controlled, although informally. It is a healthy relationship in that they are empathetic with one another, motivate and encourage one another in repayment too. In most cases, SHGs are predominantly women-centric though not necessarily.

Their objectives are basically:
- ✓ To inculcate the habit of saving and banking amongst its members
- ✓ To make them empowered financially, technically and morally
- ✓ To make them eligible to procure loans
- ✓ To attain financial liberty through credit: creditworthy
- ✓ To jointly gain knowledge and awareness with their combined participation and involvement
- ✓ To bring about awareness about the importance of women issues
- ✓ To bring about oneness and unity among women
- ✓ To empower women through financial literacy, financial access and financial security

SHGs start with Group Formation and move onto the Capital Formation stage and end with Skill Development and taking up an economic activity in order to earn an income.

6.1.2 Hand-in-Hand Hand-in –Hand that started as a Charitable Trust in 2002 and Socio Economic and Education Development Trust (SEED) are two Trusts forming one organization with the same vision and mission.

Over a period of time, they broadened their interventions to address the multidimensional factors of poverty through job creation and integrated community development. It has embarked on a dedicated mission to work for the economic and social empowerment of women, thus of society, by creating enterprises and jobs. They follow an integrated development program that creates sustainable communities. This now has Five Pillars devoted to poverty alleviation –
- Self-Help Groups and Microfinance,
- Child Labour Elimination Programme,
- Skills Development and Technology Centre,
- Health, and
- Environment.

From working in just one district in 2004, they now work in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Puducherry. Their model has been replicated in Afghanistan, South Africa, Kenya, Brazil, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Their unique Credit Plus Model was developed customizing the microfinance program to empower women with sustainable income-generation options. The program mobilizes rural women living below poverty line to form self-help groups. Their capacity is built by training them in group management and financial education.

The group's social capital is the collateral, based on which not only are they provided microfinance, they are also helped with bank linkages and hand held to develop their enterprises through business promotion initiatives like provision of backward and forward linkages, including market support.

To date, Hand-in-Hand has formed/affiliated 83, 862 SHGs, enrolled 1,166,944 SHG members, created or strengthened 1,326,004 Family-based Enterprises, enabled 43,244 Microenterprises, and 114,895 Vocational Training Beneficiaries.

Provision of customized micro-financial services like savings, credit and insurance services to the poor through an alternate delivery system of "SHG Bank Linkage program" involving banks, NGOs, and SHGs enables them to invest the capital in their microenterprises, to smoothen their consumption expenses, to increase their income and build assets and also ensure the safety of their livelihood by reducing their vulnerability.

Under the SHG bank linkage program, the bank loan outstanding to SHGs is Rs.42927 crores to 41.97 lakh SHGs, out of the total 74.30 lakhs SHGs formed as of March 2014 (NABARD's Status of Microfinance in India 2013-14 Report). The total savings mobilized by SHGs in India is estimated to be around Rs 33,000 crores. The SHG outreach appears to represent a major breakthrough in a country where 60 million households live in poverty, with very limited access to financial services.

Over 84% of the total SHGs are women SHGs and thereby SHGs have really contributed to women empowerment.

Hand in Hand India (HIH India) is actively involved in promotion of SHGs since 2004 and so far it has promoted 77,345 SHGs enrolling 10,86,165 women. Their SHGs have mobilized savings to the tune of INR 4090 million. So far,

15,090 million have been disbursed as microfinance loans to SHG members for taking up various income generation activities, that resulted in creation of 12, 57,373 enterprises as of March 2015. The success of the SHG program in HIH India is due to the process oriented capacity building support to SHGs by HIH India.

To sustain the momentum, HIH India has promoted federations of SHGs. The flow of microcredit to the rural women has created a good momentum in the Bottom of the Pyramid market to spur the growth of microenterprises. The resulting economic development of the poor has led to their social empowerment at the household and community level, which ultimately leads to the holistic human capital development. The MFI encourages the women irrespective of the economic activity and provides them with the financial support and empowering them.

6.1.3 Madura Microfinance Limited Madura Microfinance Limited with headquarters in Trichy, was started in 2005 as an NBFC (Non-Banking Finance Company) with a mission to deliver viable credit to micro-entrepreneurs. It has disbursed over 9 billion Rupees in micro loans to over 5,00,000 people across 2000 villages in Tamil Nadu.

Recognized by Forbes as the most cost efficient microfinance institution worldwide, MML has developed a digital Micro Business Education (MBE) program that provides a practical perspective through fiction film and caricature that draws from many years of research into the reasons microenterprises fails. The company, right from its founding years had followed the concept of SHG training and lending as a means to create a sustainable profit based model of rural lending. The goal was to develop a system that would be appropriate for mainstream banking and therefore bring infusions of low interest capital into rural areas on a scale that would be untenable for non-profit organisations.

95 rural branches of the Bank of Madura were developed and equipped for this operation. This effort was successful in rejuvenating and expanding the business of rural branches and transforming rural banking into a distinct business activity with profit potential. By the year 2000 Bank of Madura had developed 1500 SHGs, the largest SHG project undertaken directly by a commercial bank and was commended by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) as the No 1 SHG model in India in its report 'NABARD and MicroFinance' where they profiled the project.

In 2000, the Bank of Madura was merged with ICICI Bank where the SHG lending operations were rapidly scaled. In 2003, Microcredit Foundation of India (MFI) a Section 25 company founded by Dr. K.M. Thiagarajan, took over the management of these SHGs in Tamil Nadu in a partnership model with ICICI Bank.

Madura Micro Finance was thus established as a more sustainable and scalable business model, taking over many of the borrowers and staff of Microcredit Foundation. There were women availing loan from MFIs for non-economic purposes such as children's education & health care. Repaying through daily wages.

6.2 MFIs and AI

Although the MFI can merely disburse credit to the beneficiaries, in the capacity of an NGO, it goes a step beyond mere credit disbursements and collection of the repayments. It mentors and trains the beneficiaries periodically. It also enquires as to problems faced by them and makes changes to suit the beneficiaries and ease their lives. The principles of appreciative inquiry are inherently implemented in their interactions with the beneficiaries.

Their credit disbursal starts with the constructionist principle of proactively doing a social good in order to improve a situation. During the process of microfinance disbursements, they have made changes in the way the amounts they give or the frequency of the injections, if the initial findings warrant it. This is the principle of simultaneity. In each case, they pose queries to elicit information about progress from the respondents, the poetic principle. In first time entrepreneurship cases, they counsel the beneficiary, motivate her and even provide her with adequate
training, which is the anticipatory principle. Their entire work is aimed toward bringing about better lives for the beneficiaries, which fits the positive principle. MMF has made a video highlighting the reasons why small businesses fail and shows it in their training programs. These are all examples of proactive social work using the underlying principles of AI.

There are umpteen problems and challenges that are faced by the MFIs on a daily basis, whether it is funding, equity or loan repayments. Yet most MFIs are conscious-driven with the social motive and are able to overcome and sustain. The driving force behind most MFIs are the positive results that they can see on a continuous basis with regard to financial responsibility, adhering to financial advise by the beneficiaries and the empowerment

of not just women but the entire family. A chain of positive ripples are seen which is highly encouraging. Added to it is the RBI's support on all fronts.

All round encouragement and motivation and the impact of appreciative inquiry from all sides has enabled MFIs to continue the good work being done. Banks and other financial bodies also find it lucrative to be funding the MFIs. In all it's a win-win situation for all agencies concerned, be it banks, NBFCs, MFIs and the beneficiaries.

It may be pertinent to add at this juncture that while conducting primary research and collecting data from the women beneficiaries of both these NGOs, the questionnaire was modified midway to include questions on awareness of online marketing and willingness to market online. The beneficiaries spoke so highly of their empowerment after borrowing from these NGO-MFIs, and their success as entrepreneurs that the researcher was prompted to ask them questions to take them a step further and provide these inputs to the parent organization. This is another example of a proactive approach towards research and the implementation of AI in place of mere collection of data. When a social cause is visibly successful, all forces work towards it. That is the power of social work and AI. Learning from moments of excellence serves as the foundation of appreciative inquiry. (B.J.Mohr and J.M.Watkins, 2002)

7. Social Entrepreneurship – The Blue Revolution

Social Entrepreneurship is the way new business strategies are applied to existing social issues. Social entrepreneurs are persons who provide innovative and unique solutions to the economy's utmost problems and bring about a social change in the fields of education, health, environment and business development. They work towards eradicating society's problems of poverty by using new transformative methods instead of traditional methods.

There are different ways to bringing about change for the better:

1. Push/Pull or Trickle down effects of development policies
2. Integrate the poor into the mainstream markets
3. Improve the Family's Nutrition needs
4. Intra-Household gender equality towards empowerment

5. Higher Yields: Increase in the output leads to higher incomes and ability to eat better, sell better, save better, invest better and live better.
6. Market Linkages
7. Financial access and services
8. Resource mobilization

7.1 Modagu Vijay Gupta

Dr Gupta's work in India in early 1970s resulted in breaking the yield barrier in aquaculture, leading to doubling of production, laying the foundation for what we call as "Blue Revolution", which at that time (in 1970s) was termed as "Aquaplosion".

He assessed the physical and social resources that were accessible in the impoverished areas before developing techniques suitable for the poor. First, he trained the poor and landless people in recycling methods. Farm wastes such as rice bran, weeds and manure were used as feed for large fish stock. Next, he taught them the polyculture technique of breeding multiple species of fish in a single pond habitat. This was an effective technique wherein the farmer is able to harvest more varieties of fish with higher nutritional value.

This technique resulted in the pioneering research by Dr Gupta and his team, helped poor farmers and rural families in large parts of South and Southeast Asia, covering Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, the Lao PDR and Indonesia. They were able to use abandoned ponds, roadside ditches, seasonally flooded fields and any water bodies as small as 300-400 Sq Mts and make them into "mini factories" of fish, providing income and solace to their families. Eg, 150,000 seasonal ponds in Bangladesh that were unused are now abundant in fish.

Dr M V Gupta was the recipient of the World Food Prize in 2005 considered as Nobel Prize in Food and Agriculture and the Sunhak Peace Prize in 2015. He is hailed as the pioneer of Blue revolution. He spent his entire life in developing sustainable aquaculture and freshwater fish farming as an alternative solution to the food crisis of the future. These techniques are not only sustainable but also environment friendly, incorporating use of agricultural wastes and by-products along with innovative practices. Poverty, malnutrition and self-reliance were addressed effectively with this technique.

He enthusiastically taught these methods to the rural women with low levels of income and social status, leading to enhancement of their rights and truly empowering them, financially and socially. It

may be placed on record, his voluminous service in war-torn conflict areas, risking his own life. Farmers and consumers, looking towards recovery from the Vietnam War was an example of direct beneficiaries of this unique technique. He trained farmers and scientists to breed new species and identified new carp species that were native to India but suitable to the Mekong River environment in Southeast Asia.

He was thus able to create a solution that solved problems of population explosion and impacts of climate change.

His methodology basically involved three things:

- Worked at the grassroots level with the farmers to understand their unique situations and devise methods to implement fish farming.
- Integrated his working with the local NGOs to better connect with the people and help in financial access and overcome other bottlenecks in implementation.
- Enabled women empowerment that led to a chain of positive reinforcements at the family level and the future generations.

Dr.Gupta identified over a million ponds, roadside canals and ditches and seasonally flooded pools as potential water resources that were untapped. He enlisted non- governmental organizations (NGOs) in extending this technique to small farmers and women in order to ensure the practice of effective aquaculture.

His novel techniques have now provided Asia's poorest fish farmers the ability to provide nutrition for their families and bring in added income. Average annual fish production in India has increased from 0.5 tons per hectare in the early 1970s to between 2 to 10 tons per hectare. The carp varieties he introduced in Vietnam make up to 40 % of all freshwater fish production. In Bangladesh, fish yields grew by 300% during the 1990s.

With women beneficiaries growing from zero to 60% in fish farming, Dr Gupta has provided the path towards long-term economic, and social empowerment of men and women in rural communities.

7.2 Bottom-up Approach

"Generally, research is undertaken in research institutions/organizations and then efforts are made to transfer the results to the farming community – which some people call as "top-down approach".

Under such circumstances it has been often found that the technologies so developed do not meet the needs of the farming community as the scientists have taken in to consideration only the biological aspects of increased production and have not considered the social, economic and cultural aspects of the farming community for whom these technologies are meant.

Dr Gupta's approach applied a "bottom-up" approach that involved understanding the social, economic and cultural aspects of the community, their resources and constraints (physical, technical, financial) and then plan research taking in to consideration all the above mentioned aspects. The adoption of technology is quicker as the technology developed suited the needs of the farmer.

For this to take place the methodology used was:
  (i) Had a group meeting with the farmers to understand their economic situation, technical knowledge, their needs and constraints
  (ii) Explained the technologies that could be suitable for them and got feed back from them on the relevance of the suggested technology, modified to suit their needs based on discussion;
  (iii) Undertook research in their farms, called "on-farm research" or "farmer participatory research". Once the technology under farmers' conditions was demonstrated, then not much effort is needed by government agencies (extension department) for transfer of technology as nearby farmers saw the results for themselves and tried the technology – farmer-to-farmer extension.

This was his working at grassroots level with farmers that made some people in the early stages dubbing him as a development worker rather than a scientist/researcher. His only response to them was "I am a development researcher and my research is not for research sake, but for development. Now they understood after seeing the impact the research had made and was being followed in many countries. As he was doing things that were not conventional, some people even dubbed him as *rebel scientist* "

7.3 M V Gupta and AI

Dr Gupta's style of functioning essentially follows the process of appreciative inquiry where he discovered (identifying organizational process that works), dreamed (envisioning the processes that would work in the future), designed (Planning and prioritizing processes that would work), and destined/deployed (implementing and executing of the proposed design).

He has followed the constructionist principle when he believed in the problems and issues faced by the poor farmers, and asked them to describe their problems so that he could suggest new ideas to solve their obstacles. As an advocate of social entrepreneurship, he followed the principle of simultaneity by posing questions in such a way that he could bring about social change and bring about change for the better. By living with them and understanding their environment, he followed the poetic principle of using right words, doing right things, he influenced them and brought out the best of them. He implemented the anticipatory principle by infusing expectations and hope in the poor farmers. His whole work and entire life has been a positive principle wherein he brought in positive affect and social bonding and sentiments like hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie and joy increase creativity, openness to new ideas and people, and cognitive flexibility were infused and incorporated.

8. Relevance in Underdeveloped Countries

In developing countries acute poverty especially in the rural areas is a complex and ambiguous phenomenon. The perception amongst villagers is that aid and help has to always come from outside the village. Their attitudes are more of an acceptance of their fate or give up on oneself or disgruntlement towards the government. Dependence has become the norm. Excessive dependence makes them sometimes lazy and irresponsible too as they develop a habit of blaming the authorities for their fate. The tool of appreciative inquiry helps them to look for solutions from within and make them independent. Along the process they make the growth story sustainable.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is an independent, non-profit organization that integrates environmental and social priorities to provide practical solutions to economic development. The Institute is engaged in collaborating globally through negotiations and spreads the knowledge gained. It is based in Canada with offices in Switzerland and the US and is operational in over 70 countries.

The Department for International Development (DfID) is a department of the UK government and is responsible for overseas aid. It aims to promote sustainable development and eliminate world poverty.

Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA), recognized as a leader in participatory community empowerment methodologies is an NGO that has vast experience in incubating, developing and managing savings and credit programs in Southern India.

These three organizations with their individual strengths worked together in the project called 'The Positive Path' where they explored possible applications and limitations of appreciative inquiry and its relation to participatory rural appraisal (PRA). Governmental and non-governmental organizations in India were provided with a method of designing and delivering programs that can be constructed on local strengths, achievements. The vision here is to advance sustainable development and facilitate sustainable livelihoods, especially in the underdeveloped and developing countries. 500 groups for a total reach of over 10,000 people were involved in this project by MYRADA, in which at least 70 organizations with about 500 staff took part.

AI and PRA enabled to *discover* people's strengths and use the momentum and energy generated to build a group vision and action plan (*dream and design*). The *delivery* of the vision followed, that too before schedule. AI starts with the premise that an inquiry into organizational life begins with appreciation. It has to be a collaborative process where all the key stakeholders are involved. The approach does not believe in improving an organization by identifying and removing its deficits. AI views organizations as a 'mystery to be embraced', and can be improved by discovery and valuing, envisioning, dialogue and co-constructing the future. It is the linkages between the organization's components that shape the organization and determine its effectiveness. It is greater than the sum of its parts.

The Project used the Constructionist Principle that postulates that reality is derived from an organization's collective experiences, assumptions and expectations. The villagers jointly discussed and identified the available resources. By this method, social knowledge and community are interwoven. By the Simultaneity Principle, inquiry and change are not separate moments that occur simultaneously. AI focuses on the positive and life-giving forces. The anticipatory principle postulates that current behavior is guided by images of the future. The villagers formed expectations of the future and based their current action on the images they foresaw. Thus they respond positively according to events that occur, which is, the drawing and identifying resources and an anticipative component is the positive speculation on what is to come. Just as the positive principle advocates, it has been found that the more positive the questions that are asked, the more people are engaged by the inquiry process and the longer the benefits are sustained.

AI rests on a belief that something works in every system, organization or individual. Building on those strengths is what AI focuses on. It is important to focus on what works as it influences the way in which people perceive themselves. Beliefs that were rooted with them are questioned and understand the control they have on their future. This triggers other regressive beliefs to be abandoned.

Thus in developing countries and underdeveloped countries, AI is a useful tool that can motivate the rural poor to reform themselves and lift them out of poverty. Cohesiveness and cooperation among the villagers and harmony brings about positive impact towards sustainable development and growth. This is an add-on to the policies and injections and inducements that governments provide.

9. Concluding Note on Appreciative Inquiry

It can be said that the principles of appreciative inquiry have been very strongly used in research and all the more when research is toward a social good and social entrepreneurship is in play. MFIs use social capital as collateral and there is no other collateral when giving loans to the women. The cause of financial inclusion and women empowerment, are the greater gain in both the organizations studied that use AI extensively. (Hand-in-Hand, Madura Micro Finance). In the case of Centre for Microfinance, all their research studies are AI-centric because of which they are able to get concrete results out of the research conducted. In the case of the social entrepreneur, Dr M V Gupta, the power of appreciative inquiry has been the sole premise of his entire work. As far as social change is concerned, MYRADA's exemplary work is another example to show the relevance of Appreciative Inquiry in developing countries towards sustainable growth and economic development.

The tool of appreciative inquiry is a tool that results in positive outcomes and learning. It has to be applied in various avenues, wherever the human element is an input, which is again why AI is required.

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