



Swami Vivekananda

**Contributor Personality Program**

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An Adani Group Initiative

UNIT 11:

# Practise Imaginative Sympathy

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for students and faculty of  
Gujarat Technological University

by

**i-become** University  
Services

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## UNIT 11:

# Practise Imaginative Sympathy

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One of the unique qualities of Contributors is their ability to appreciate and understand others' life situation, others' mental condition, and others' point of view. How do they do this?

They have consciously developed a 'way of thinking' called 'Imaginative Sympathy'. In this way of thinking, they are able to give due importance to the human aspects of a situation, and not just the technical or commercial aspects.

But this is not all. Imaginative Sympathy goes beyond looking at the human aspects of the situation. It also means that Contributors are able to anticipate possible interactions or reactions, they are able to take a multi-dimensional view of a situation and they are able to bring about changes or results while taking everybody along with them.

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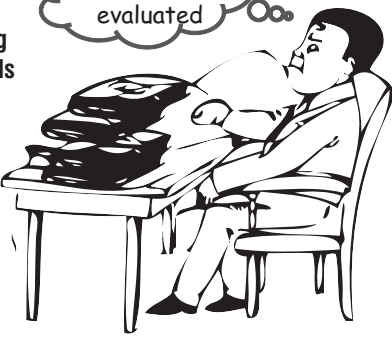
## Concept Exploration

### EXPLORATION 1:

**Non-contributors look at the activity dimension of work**


One more proposal to be evaluated

**Clearing Proposals**



**Contributors also look at the vision dimension of their work**

By completing this proposal, I will be able to make one more contribution to national development.



### REFLECTIONS

Take up 3 or 4 common professions and brainstorm to uncover the “vision dimension” in their work. Write about these.

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## EXPLORATION 2:

<p><b>Non-contributors look at the <i>process efficiency dimension</i> of work</b></p> <p>Today we "processed" 200 more patients than yesterday</p> 	<p><b>Contributors also look at the <i>human dimension</i> of their work</b></p> <p>Today we were able to "serve" 200 more people as compared to yesterday</p> 
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## REFLECTIONS

What happens when people miss out on the human dimension of work? Share some experiences you have come across that help you explain this.

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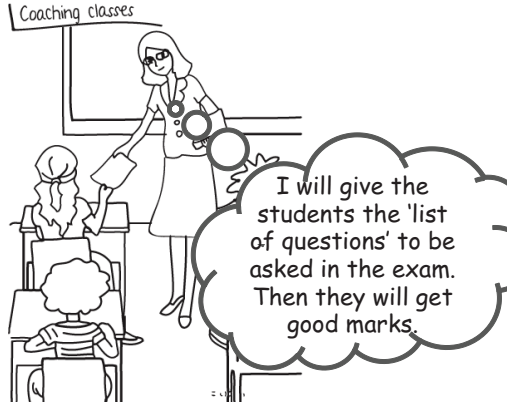
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**EXPLORATION 3:**

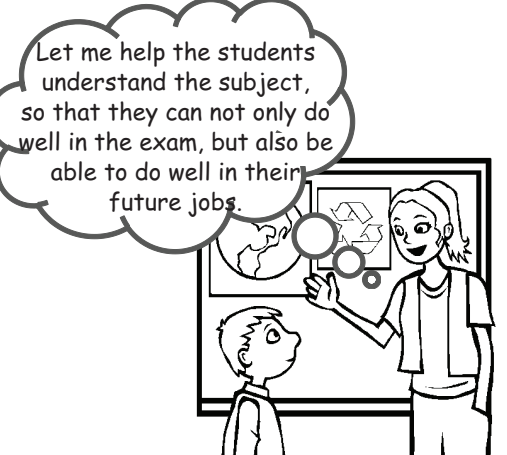
**Non-contributors look at the *immediate benefits* of the situation.**



Coaching classes

I will give the students the 'list of questions' to be asked in the exam. Then they will get good marks.

**Contributors also look at the *longer-term consequences* of the situation**



Let me help the students understand the subject, so that they can not only do well in the exam, but also be able to do well in their future jobs.

 **REFLECTIONS**

Take up a situation in your own life where you have a choice between “immediate benefits” and “long-term / sustainable benefits”. Discuss the situation and your own choice.

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**EXPLORATION 4:**

<p><b>Non-contributors see themselves in narrow “material” terms</b></p> <p>My degree gives me the power to get a job.</p> 	<p><b>Contributors are able to see themselves in wider “change-maker” terms</b></p> <p>My education gives me the power to transform society in my own way.</p> 
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 **REFLECTIONS**

Are you a change-maker? Write a half-page note explaining why you can be a change-maker in society.

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## Concept Application

### APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.1:

### NEWS ANALYSIS

*An Excerpt from an article in Hindustan Times, Mumbai Edition, May 21, 2011*

## Clean-up drive or fine collection drive of BMC

More than four months after the clean-up marshals scheme was discontinued over charges of corruption, the civic standing committee has cleared an altered version of the scheme on Friday, which drastically reduces the powers given to clean-up marshals.

However, despite clearing the proposal, the corporators remain skeptical about the usefulness of the campaign. The scheme, introduced, in 2007 came under fire last year and was discontinued. Congress corporator Sameer Desai said that instead of bringing about awareness and inducing clean habits amongst citizens, the focus of the drive had shifted to collecting fines. “Is this a



drive to make the city clean or to earn revenue? The scheme has not even resulted in one clean street in the city,” Desai had said.

Additional Municipal Commissioner Manisha Mhaikar said that the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation would ensure that marshals do not misuse the scheme. Also, a new clause has been introduced, wherein even the marshals or their appointing agency can be fined for wrongdoing.

“The chief shortcomings of the previous scheme were the approach of marshals towards people and their lack of awareness about the role of a BMC representative.” said BP Patil, Chief Engineer of the Solid Waste Management department of the BMC.



 **REFLECTIONS**

Q1. The lack of recognition of the importance of the role they were to play in the lives of citizens, and an inability to fully appreciate the consequences of their actions, led the clean-up marshals to lose focus. The drive which was supposed to ensure the city was kept clean by the citizens, instead came to be seen as a fine collection drive.

What would have been the consequences of this for –

– *The credibility of this campaign?*

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– *The citizens of Mumbai?*

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– *The Municipal Corporation?*

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– *India?*

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 **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

Q2. Imagine in the workplace, you are developing a product to deliver to your boss. What if you lose sight of the end users that the product is meant to serve, and you are unable to imagine how your product can help these end users in the best possible way? What will be the consequences / effects of this –

*[Hint: Think of how your work will become routinized and boring because you have lost sight of the vision you serve.]*

– *On the future users of the product?*

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– *On your organization?*

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– *On yourself?*

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**APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.2:**

**SCENARIO**

Dr. Shah is a well-known orthopedic surgeon, specializing in back-related illnesses. He consults in several large hospitals and also has his own private practice.

Manu has been having a bad back pain for several weeks. He finds it hard to sit for a long time. He takes a 11:30 am appointment to consult Dr. Shah in his private clinic.

Let me hurry. Have to reach the Doctor's clinic on time.

On reaching there, he finds that the Doctor has not come in as yet.

We have been waiting for over 1 hour

These seats are terrible!! My back is worse!

Dr. Shah comes in 45 minutes later, gives a curt apology to all, as he walks into his cabin.

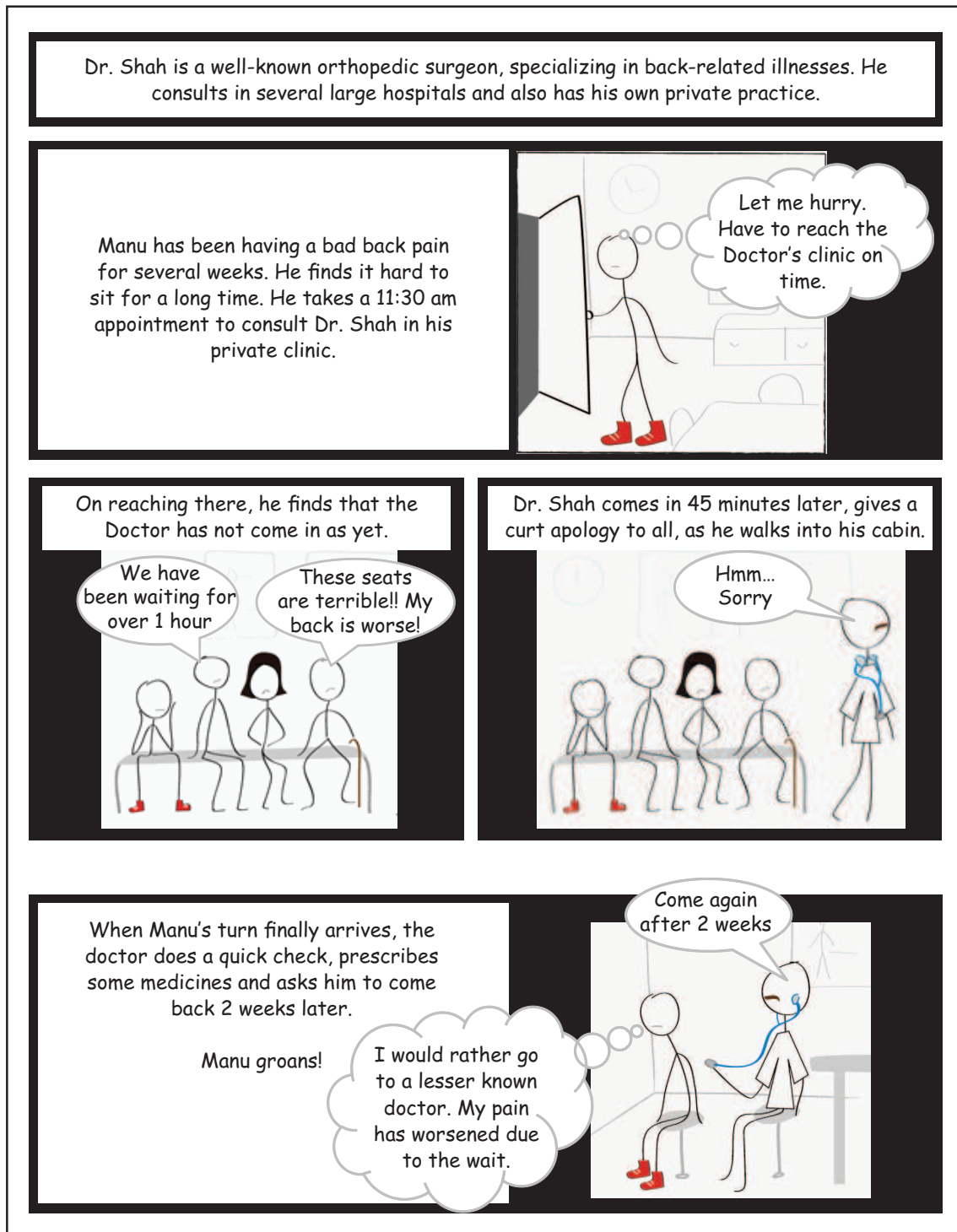
Hmm... Sorry

When Manu's turn finally arrives, the doctor does a quick check, prescribes some medicines and asks him to come back 2 weeks later.

Manu groans!

I would rather go to a lesser known doctor. My pain has worsened due to the wait.

Come again after 2 weeks



 **REFLECTIONS**

Dr. Shah is an expert and is very competent in his field of work. Yet his actions show that he does not have the ‘human touch’ in his interactions with patients. Further, despite his customers being back patients, he has not cared enough to provide comfortable seating in case they have to wait for long.

Q1. What is the importance of recognizing the ‘human-level concerns’ of his patients?

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Q2. What are the consequences of not doing so – on his patients? on his future medical practice (and business)?

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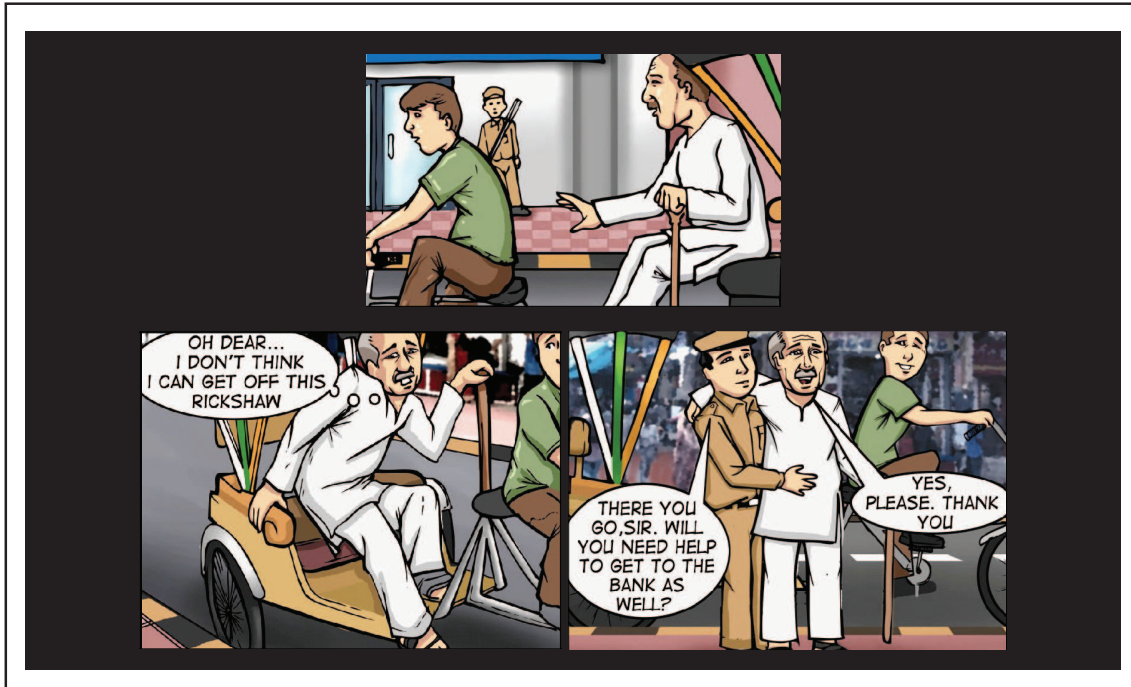
 **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

Q3. What is the value of “human touch” in customer service interactions? Discuss to think of examples showing the importance of this “human touch”.

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**APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.3:**

**SCENARIO**



 **REFLECTIONS**

Q1. The watchman was aware of his power to contribute in the situation. He did not restrict himself to just guarding the gate. He contributed to his customer first and foremost as a human being.

– What fulfillment would he have got from this interaction?

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– What value did he create for the customer and for the bank?

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Q2. Write about a person, whom you have seen converting any role or work into an opportunity for him/her to make a positive difference to the people around.

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 **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

Q3. In your own work role or role as a student, what are the ways in which you can contribute and make a difference to the lives of people around you?

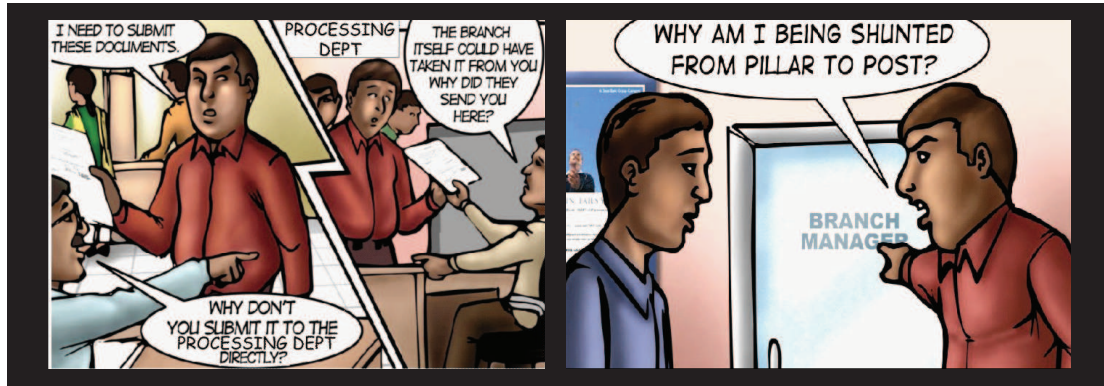
Write down at least 2 new ways in which you can make a difference to the lives of people around you.

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**APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.4:**

**SCENARIO**

Paresh goes to the insurance office to submit some documents for a claim.



 **REFLECTIONS**

The officials at the insurance office were focused on their functional role without any thought of the trouble Paresh was being put through. Hence Paresh was made to run from one office department to another without his work getting done.

Q1. What are the immediate and longer-term consequences of their actions –

– *In Paresh's life?*

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– *On other customers like him?*

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– *For the overall service levels of the company?*

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## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Q2. Discuss to answer –

When you are assigned a project, why is it beneficial to you to

(i) *“engage deeply” with it (to understand the issues, study the subject area, final solutions that work, etc.) rather than*

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(ii) *copying from a senior or doing a “chalta hai” job of it?*

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Think of and write about the –

– *immediate consequences and benefits of both actions (i) and (ii).*

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– *longer-term consequences and benefits of both actions (i) and (ii).*

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Thus, which of the two (i) and (ii) are more beneficial to you in the longer-term in your career?


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**APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.5:**

**ROLE MODEL**

Known for her no-nonsense ways, Kiran Bedi introduced a new way of policing in Tihar Jail. Once considered a hell hole, today Tihar stands testimony to the transformative intervention led by Bedi.




The jail was a mad house. Inmates were treated with no respect. I shared my cell with 25 other inmates. Fights were frequent. I did not know whether life was more miserable outside or inside.



It was accepted by all that a jail term had to be made miserable. I challenged that. Jail has to be transformative. Only then will we have reformed citizens.

The first day Bedi walked into the jail in plain clothes.



Madam asked us, "Do you pray?"

I was surprised... I did not answer.


When none of us said anything, she asked us, "Would you like to pray?"



I wanted to give them the message that 'I am here for you for a new way of life'.

When we finished praying there was complete silence. We had broken the ice.

Next, Bedi introduced a series of transformative measures in the jail such as literacy and higher education programs, panchayat system for self management of prison by inmates, de-addiction programs etc. Bedi and her team worked with missionary zeal to get these interventions to become an integral part of the jail. The sustained and persuasive effort started showing results after some time.



I completed my graduation from open university while in jail. This was after a break of 7 years.

We formed different committees to manage kitchen, library, sports activities, internal discipline etc. It was very satisfying to do something constructive.

In my teens I got addicted to drugs. Here, I underwent counseling for de-addiction.



 **REFLECTIONS**

Kiran Bedi did not see herself only as the “Inspector-General of Prisons of Tihar Jail”. She saw herself as someone who had the power to transform the lives and futures of the jail in-mates.

Q1. In Kiran Bedi’s words, “ These transformations require missionary zeal from the leader”. One has to feel the joy of giving, only then deep rooted change is possible. What kind of choices do you think she had to make to bring about this change?

- [Hints: Think of what choices she had to make –*
- as a lady in a man’s domain*
  - to challenge a system, which worked in a certain fixed way.]*

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Q2. Think of and write about one example of deep-rooted transformation that you may have read about or heard of. Write about how the people involved widened their “vision of their role” to see themselves as “change-makers”.

- [Hints:*
- what is the context?*
  - what was the need of transformation?*
  - what were the alternatives available?*
  - how was the final choice made?]*

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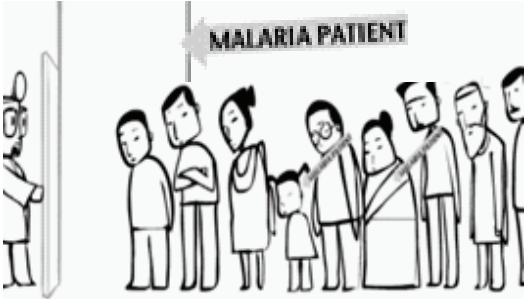


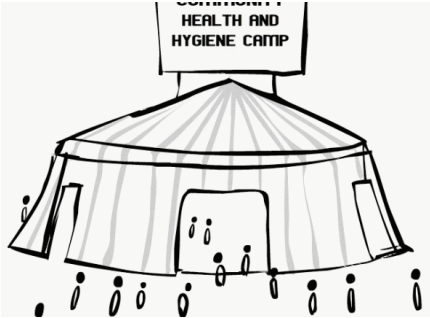
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**APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.6:**

**CASE STORY**

<p>Dr. Patel reads in the newspaper about Malaria epidemic in his city.</p> 	<p>He starts receiving malaria patients in his clinic.</p> 
<p>However, the number of malaria patients coming to his clinic keeps increasing every day. He is concerned. He thinks over the issue and realizes that he has to play a more active role in addressing the problem.</p> 	<p>He identifies pockets of stagnant water in the locality and works with the municipality to get them covered. He then arranges for fumigation of the area.</p> 
<p>After a few days, Dr. Patel reads that the city is still struggling in its fight against Malaria.</p> 	<p>He decides to hold Health and Hygiene camps to educate the people, until even children begin to take care of the hygiene in the city.</p>  <p>By the end of a few months, the city was free of Malaria.</p>

*Based on a true case story*

 **REFLECTIONS**

Dr. Patel realized that his treatment of patients is only a temporary solution to the Malaria problem. It did not actually provide a real solution to the epidemic. He therefore starts looking for better and better ways of providing a more permanent solution.

Q1. Learning from this story, as a contributor, what do you think are some of the choices one needs to make so as to be able to find deeper solutions to a problem? Discuss to write down a few key strategies / tips you can learn from Dr. Patel to apply for yourself.

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**APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.7:**

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

*[Adapted from an article appearing in April 23, 2011 edition of Mumbai Mirror]*

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011, Pradeep Kumar was piloting Pragati Express from Mumbai’s CST station to Pune. When the train was crossing one of the in-between stations, a paver block which was kept on an over-bridge fell and smashed the window of the locomotive engine.

The shards pierced Pradeep’s face, neck and hand. Blood was oozing from the wounds. He blacked out for a second.



Even though he had the option of stopping for medical aid, he chose not to stop for medical aid immediately. He was aware that his train was running on the high traffic central suburban railway tracks. Any delay would put the entire suburban railway schedule into disarray.

He chose to pilot the train to a junction an hour’s distance away from whereon the traffic became lighter, before stopping for medical aid.

*[Adapted from an article appearing in Jan 04, 2007 edition of Mumbai Mirror]*

On 4th January 2007, a Western Railway train in Mumbai bound from Churchgate to Virar inexplicably did not halt at a scheduled in-between station. It overshot the station and stopped 155 metres ahead of the station.

Commuters who had to get down at this station had to jump off the train and tread their way back, running the risk of being run over by approaching trains. Many had to take a train back from the next station.



Motorman J Ramachandran, on being questioned, responded, “A motorman is running more trains now than earlier. The level of alertness required is tremendous and all the stress is telling on us. It is unfortunate that this incident happened, but we are not to be blamed.”

 **REFLECTIONS**

Q1. Pradeep Kumar understood the importance of his role and that if he failed to make an appropriate choice in the situation, it would impact the lives of thousands of commuters/ travelers. What were the benefits of his action –

– *for Pradeep Kumar*

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– *for commuters*

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– *for the railways*

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Q2. Do you know of more incidents like this, when a person acted in a certain way because s/he appreciated the consequences of her/his actions. Write about one such incident.

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**APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.8:**

SCENARIO





## REFLECTIONS

Q1. Malini knew the value of the work she did for her colleagues. She had the foresight and concern to appreciate the difficulties her company could face, when she left. Thus she took responsibility for ensuring transition to a new officer was smooth. What would have been the consequences had Malini not proactively taken responsibility in this situation, and left without making suitable arrangements –

*[Hint: Think of the longer-term consequences over and above the immediate consequences.]*

– *For her organization and colleagues?*

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– *For her own work satisfaction?*

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– *For her future career prospects?*

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**APPLICATION EXAMPLE 11.9:**

**CASE STORY**



**PRADEEP KUMAR,  
FOUNDER CEO-MART**

The most important aspect while selling and marketing to rural India is to understand usage of products. Take for example, pressure cookers. In urban India, most of the cooking is done on a counter top, whereas in rural areas cooking happens at the floor level. Therefore, cookers need to have two handles to enable easy handling. Just having one handle will not work. It is a simple aspect of a product, but it makes a huge difference in terms of usage. In order to understand the needs of rural India we need to resort to what I call 'community embedded innovation'.

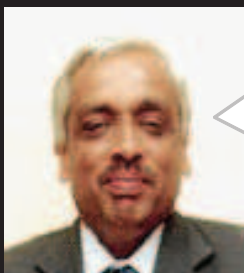
One of the creators of WordPress, Matt Mullenweg, was interacting with wordpress users...

The media library in WordPress was discussed. A man in the audience brought up a technical issue he had with the library. Mullenweg explained that you could actually do what the man wanted to in WordPress, but stated: "The software is wrong, not the people".

Mullenweg could have just told the man that "you're doing it wrong" before telling him the "right" way to work with WordPress. Instead, the fact that users had problems with the media library told him that the software needed to be improved.



**MATT MULLENWEG,  
CEO-WORDPRESS**



**G PADMANABHAN,  
RBI EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR**

Banks should ensure transactions are hassle-free and user-friendly.

For example, multi-layer security by way of login password, transaction password and confidential data confirmation make online transactions more secure. But, there are issues like memorizing multiple passwords etc. Some transactions of urgent nature get stuck due to these problems. This, coupled with the time taken for access re-activation, password generation, etc, which is sometimes a lengthy, time-taking process, causes irritation and inconvenience to the customer.



 **REFLECTIONS**

The above 3 examples demonstrate that it is very important to deeply understand the end-user / customer in order to design products and services that truly address their needs.

Q1. Identify one service/product that you use currently, which you think could be improved to make it easier to use. What factors do you feel were not taken into consideration while designing this product/service, thus making it more difficult to use?

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 **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

Q2. Though companies keep stating how “user-centric” they are, most often we as users ourselves find that there is a lot lacking in that aspect. What are the consequences of not being “user-centric” when designing products or services –

– *on users?*

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– *on the company?*

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– *on the designers of the products?*

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## 11.10: FIELD WORK

### PROJECT 1:

**Project Goal:** *To study how people (contributors) “practice imaginative sympathy”.*

**STEP 1:** Identify any one Contributor who you believe is a “change-maker” in his/her profession and approach to any work. It is recommended that you choose a “contributor” who is known to you or you can get in touch with, so that you can get the chance to interview this person. *(This person may be from any field of work, and may be personally known to you OR may be a well-known person with whom you can get an interview OR someone who works in your locality eg: postman, watchman, etc.)*

**STEP 2:** Decide how you are going to present your project. As a –

- Home-video project (recording a video of interviews etc. to make a short-film on the case), OR
- Slide presentation (with photographs, factual data, insights, sound / music, etc.), OR
- Poster presentation (with photographs, factual data, insights, etc.)

**STEP 3:** Interview this person and also talk to other people who know this person and interact regularly with him/her during the course of his/her work.

In the interview, ask this person –

- Talk about your profession / work and what you do.  
*(Discuss with him/her to find out what is the “vision dimension” that he/she sees in the work i.e. what is the vision he/she has of his/her role)*
- Narrate 2-3 specific examples of –
  - Typical interactions with colleagues, juniors, seniors, customers – describing how you interact with them.
  - How you would describe the daily work you do / targets you meet.  
*(In his/her answer, observe: In this person’s narration of these examples, does he/she talk about the “human dimension” of the work or is only focused on the “efficiency dimension” of the work.)*
- Share about a situation / experience in your work life where you had the choice between “immediate benefits” and “long terms / sustainable benefits”. What was the choice you made and why?
- In your job / role, what is the “power” you have to contribute and make a positive difference in society? How can you increase this “power” to contribute more?

**STEP 4:** Make your final presentation by compiling the answers from your interviews / research and your observations on each of these answers, highlighting how this person practiced “imaginative sympathy” in his/her work.

**STEP 5:** Present in the class.



Swami Vivekananda speaks to you

## Expand your heart

*No individual can be a contributor if he/she is self-centered and uncaring about others. Therefore, to be a contributor, we must first expand our hearts. At the same time, one of the effects of contribution is that our hearts get expanded greatly.*

“First, feel from the heart. What is in the intellect or reason? It goes a few steps and there it stops. But through the heart comes inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe.

“Who feels there for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken forever in poverty and ignorance? Where is the way out? Who feels for them? They cannot find light or education. Who will bring the light to them – who will travel from door to door bringing education to them? Let these people be your God – think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly – the Lord will show you the way.

“Him I call a Mahâtman (great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a Durâtman (wicked soul). Let us unite our wills in continued prayer for their good. We may die unknown, unpitied, unbewailed, without accomplishing anything – but not one thought will be lost. It will take effect, sooner or later.

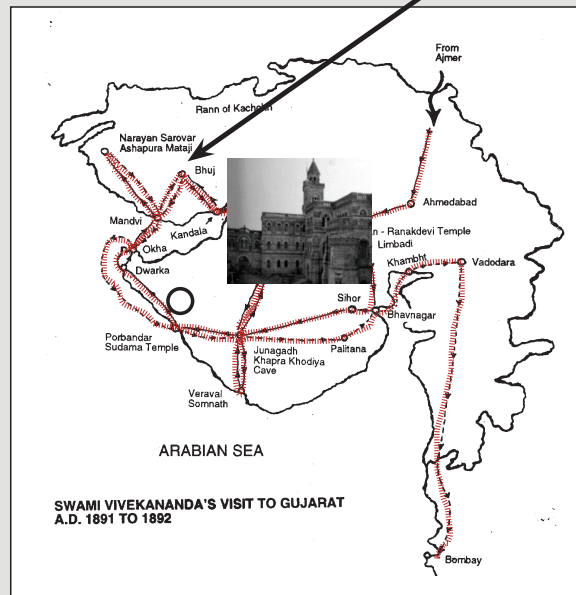
“So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them! I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages!

“Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots! Do you feel? Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of gods and of sages have become next-door neighbours to brutes? Do you feel that millions are starving today, and millions have been starving for ages? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Does it make you sleepless? Has it gone into your blood, coursing through your veins, becoming consonant with your heartbeats? Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of the misery of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name, your fame, your wives, your children, your property, even your own bodies? Have you done that?

“Have you never thought, of the hearts of the heroes? How they were great, great, great, and soft as butter?

Source: The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (Published by Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 14, India)

### Swami Vivekananda at Bhuj



Swami Vivekananda visited Kutch and met the Dewan Motichand Lalchand who introduced him to the Maharaja Rao Khengarji Bahadur III. He had long talks with both of them, upon the industrial, agricultural and economic problems of the land. He impressed upon them the need for ameliorating the condition of the masses as he had a great faith in the ability of the rulers to do good to their subjects if they could be taught about the ancient Indian ideals of civil government.

The Maharaja of Kutch was one of the most cultured, advanced and enlightened native rulers of India. He took keenest interest in the subject of female education, got many standard English works translated into Gujarati and carried out considerable improvement in public works. Being three years younger to Swami Vivekananda, he must have entered into intimate friendship with him. The Maharaja was deeply impressed by Swami Vivekananda's magnetic personality and was astonished at his vast knowledge. He said : "Swami Vivekananda, as after reading my books the head becomes dazed, even so after hearing your discourses my brain becomes dizzy. How will you utilise this talent? You will never rest until you have done wonderful things !"

Source: Shri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, website ([www.rkmrajkot.org](http://www.rkmrajkot.org))



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The material in this booklet is meant to be studied along with the material available at [gtu.ibecome.in](http://gtu.ibecome.in)

You will find videos, concept presentations, quizzes to improve your understanding of the topic.

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