

## BRIEF COMMENTARY

# Varshita Venkatesh Written-Word Workshop: A ‘no-income-to-entrepreneur’ sustainable social-entrepreneurship philanthropic construct

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### ABSTRACT

The Varshita Venkatesh Written-Word Workshop set up by the author in honour and memory of his wife Varshita, who ascended to her heavenly home in January 2020, can be labelled as a ‘no-income-to-entrepreneur’ social entrepreneurship construct which knits together a swathe of different stakeholders to the ‘Varshita Venkatesh family of charitable funds’, so to say, and uncovers and creates value of different types—economic, social, spiritual, psychological and moral. It has a long way to go, in this ‘value-creating’ journey and contribute to sustainable development in its own humble way.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship; philanthropic; shared value; social welfare

## 1. Introduction

The author had published three volumes of poetry in the past—between 2015 and 2020, and arranged for whatever royalties that may accrue on the sales thereof to be directly remitted to two NGOs in India—Water for People, and in Defence of Animals; and St Jude Children’s Research Hospital in the USA. Buyers (readers) would get poetry to read and the satisfaction of having contributed to noble humanitarian causes. The recipients would benefit from the deployment of the cash inflows—villagers in West Bengal, homeless cats and dogs in Mumbai, and children undergoing treatment for cancer in the USA. This, it turned out, was not destined to stop there...

## 2. Social welfare—Bottom-up efforts

In 2020, a few months before the third of the aforesaid three volumes of poetry was published, when the author’s wife succumbed to cancer, the author decided to set up a series of charitable funds, with the support of, and under the aegis of several NGOs (Save the Child, Médecins Sans Frontières, Sightsavers, Plan USA<sup>[1]</sup>, Plan India<sup>[2]</sup>, Gharkul<sup>[3]</sup>, Sakhi for Girls’ Education, etc.)—some short-term and some long-term. In addition to these, a memorial prize was also instituted in a department in a foreign university<sup>[4]</sup> the author’s wife was employed by when she passed away.

The author then hit upon an idea—a social entrepreneurship construct which he named the Varshita

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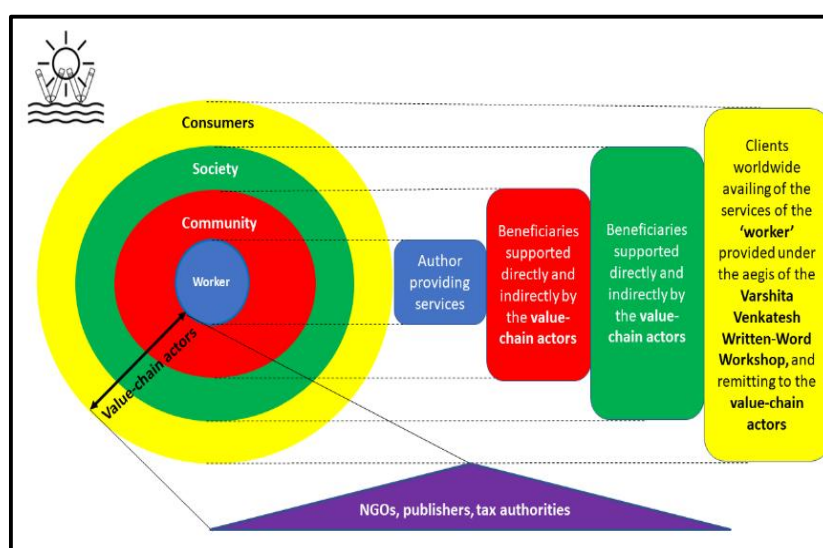
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Venkatesh Written-Word Workshop (henceforth referred to as VVWW). This was founded on the premise of trust and do-goodery and would aspire to generate value for all the stakeholders involved, and in the process, serve as the ‘front-person’ for the family of the active ‘Varshita Venkatesh funds’. As mentioned earlier, some of the funds were short-term, and have already fulfilled the noble purposes they were supposed to, during the COVID pandemic, when there was a need for all humans to try to help each other to the utmost.

### 3. Stakeholders in the setup

Let us first focus on **Figure 1** (a social life-cycle analysis ‘onion’ diagram which shows all the stakeholders in the VVWW value chain).



**Figure 1.** Onion-diagram depicting the stakeholders in VVWW.

The worker at the heart of the onion is the author who undertakes assignments—writing, editing, proofing and translating..., essentially everything to do with the ‘Written Word’—for/from ‘consumers’ (clients) who form the outer periphery in the diagram. The clients are given the option to decide how much they wish to pay. The decision of a client is not challenged or questioned by the author. The client may know what the market rate is, and may decide to pay less, or on par, or if she/he is endowed with a strong philanthropic spirit, may even decide to pay more—a premium over the prevailing market rate. Additionally, the client also has the free will to choose the fund (named after the author’s late wife—Varshita Venkatesh) she/he would like to donate to, from among a clutch of options provided to her/him.

The value-chain actors comprise of NGOs and institutions which house and administer the said funds, publishers (both those who remit to the funds on the author’s behalf in cases where the author has direct dealings with them; as well as those the clients availing of the editing/proofing/translating/writing services liaise with), and the national tax authorities offering tax rebates on donations made to charitable causes (wherever that may apply).

The beneficiaries—in the community and the global society—are those who avail of the good work done by the NGOs. In the case of VVWW and the funds it is linked to, these are girls from around the world who get a decent education, cancer patients, and specially-abled children.

### 4. Shared value—What is value?

There are ‘defaults’ often when one tries to interpret or understand the meanings of terms they read or

hear. ‘Value’ is one such term, and depending on your outlook towards, and status, profession, ambitions and goals in life, you would define it differently. There are several types of value—economic, moral, environmental, spiritual, mental-emotional and intellectual..., in other words, ‘value provision’ here is simply an enhancement of well-being, an improvement of some kind. When we refer to ‘shared value’, it is not at all necessary that what is shared must be of the same type! You may provide one type of value to someone and get a different type of value for yourself in the process.

The consumer (client) in the value chain gets ‘high-value’, ‘high-quality’ output from VVWWW which may give him/her economic value subsequently. The author seeks and derives moral, ethical and spiritual value—the abstract sort, which he dedicates to his wife up in heaven. The client, in addition to the non-abstract value (the output from VVWWW), may also seek and obtain emotional value, by experiencing a feeling of contentment after having donated to a charitable cause. The NGOs/institutions at the receiving end/s of the payments made by the clients sustain their moral value and pass on precious social value to the beneficiaries, contributing to the education-related (Sustainable Development Goal or SDG 4, SDG 5) and health-related (SDG 3) goals set by the United Nations for year-2030.

While the clients hail from all over the world (VVWWW is a global social entrepreneurship construct, which aspires to become truly international, as far as its geographic footprint is concerned), the value-chain actors currently are Plan USA, Plan International India, Gharkul (Mumbai, India), and the Shaukat Khanum Hospital<sup>[5]</sup> (Pakistan), BookBoon (Denmark)—connected to Plan USA<sup>[1]</sup>, and Locksley Hall Publishing (India)—connected to Plan India<sup>[2]</sup>. The last two are the ones the author has direct dealings with, books published by them being the enabling links.

What are we missing here? Competitors as value-chain actors, perhaps? Does VVWWW eat into someone else’s market share? Certainly not. The author believes that there is a much greater demand for such services, than supply. It is a free market. VVWWW does not ‘dump’ as countries employing cheap labour do, in global markets. Further, there is also the hope that this social entrepreneurship philanthropic construct may inspire and motivate others to follow suit. It will simply mean a groundswell of goodness, of do-goodery, leading to greater social welfare..., a necessary paradigm shift.

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## **Conflict of interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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