



Reminiscing Mr. Chanchal Sengupta Former CEO of Silence, Kolkata & Former Secretary, FTF-I

Mr. Chanchal Sen Gupta will continue to live in the memory of those, who have been marching with him to build up Fair Trade movement in India, for last one decade. The first few words of all those who try to reminiscence about him are “hard work and positivism”.

Chanchal Da worked with Silence, an organisation based in Kolkata, established in 1979 by a small group of deaf artists in grouped together with the dream of economic self sufficiency. He was born with a congenital heart defect, and could not walk even 10 meters at a stretch due to his condition. He overcame this by carrying an oxygen cylinder wherever he went. He studied on his bed and acquired good education. He got a job in the Fair Trade business. His work took him to places, including travelling in Europe. He conducted MARKETING and fundraising tours. He is the biggest contributor when SILENCE received the National Awards for Best NGO (state and national level in 2003) for outstanding performance in the field of welfare for persons with disabilities.

Chanchal Da was also the youngest among the Executive Committee members of FTF-I, who worked closely with the National Secretariat (FTF-I) team. He had an eye for grabbing ideas, for his work, almost from anywhere. Once he was looking at the wood carvings being made by artisans from Shilpa, Bangalore, and he instantly developed an idea that it can be adapted to develop new designs of candle, back at Silence. His eye for getting lessons, which has a direct use at his core work in Fair Trade, was in fact a part of his personality.

He was one of a few who worked closely with FTF-I during the course of its emergence as one of the big national networks of Fair Trade. He worked gracefully to build up the spirit of inclusiveness in the network, which is perhaps the biggest quality, which is going to fuel the further growth of FTF-I. Perhaps that spirit of inclusiveness is the biggest legacy or the footprint, which he leaves behind for the coming generation of Fair Trade leaders.

He had been asked by medical science to walk less and take less stress, the dictums, which were difficult for him to follow. Many times he inspired all with his high level of efficiency while dealing with the tough delivery schedules of product orders and the demand for quality, the two areas, which put utmost pressure to any craft producing organisation. God took him to his loving home on 23rd June 2012 at Kolkata.

Chanchal Da, during his lifetime, also received the West Bengal state award for ‘Outstanding Employee with Disability’ for his various achievements in promoting Fair Trade and encouraging physically challenged persons to work at SILENCE or in other organizations.

Today, Silence not only creates craft products, they also train disabled people in Information Technology and data entry. The employment and self-sufficiency is tremendously important to the disabled person and their families, many of whom would suffer tremendous hardship and difficulties without it. Silence has won several national and international awards for the work that they do. Fair TRADE is another activity that SILENCE is passionate about. SILENCE believes in Fair TRADE and is an international partner of the World Fair TRADE Organization. Additionally, SILENCE disapproves of middlemen and it tries to eliminate them in the supply-chain model so that the legitimate producer of product or service gets a fair deal.

Memories of Chanchal Da, who dared to travel to many distances to serve the cause of Fair Trade, often challenging his deteriorating health, will be inspiring. Memories never die and the movement he served and built up must go on. But the Fair Trade Fraternity will really miss his words of positivity, wisdom, inspiring hard work and beautiful smile.

(Prepared with few inputs from FTF-I Archives-Communiqué issue July 2012)