

Streamlining processes the humane way

Murli Menon profiles organisational consultant Swastika Ramamurthy

SOMEONE has rightly said, "Enjoy what you do and do what you enjoy and you don't have to work for a minute". Meet Swastika Ramamurthy, who personifies this saying.

Swastika is a neuro-physiologist-turned editor turned organisational consultant. After short stints at Jaslok Hospital and the British Council, Bombay, Swastika underwent special training under the tutelage of Prof Pulin Garg, professor of organisational behaviour at IIM, Ahmedabad, before taking up consultancy.

In Bangalore, Swastika does organisational development programmes for corporate clients. As a member of the Indian Society for Individual Self Development (ISISD) founded by Prof Pulin Garg at Ahmedabad, she does what is called identity level work. They believe in experiential learning, providing space for trust. Most clients are executives and managers, but she also runs workshops for students. The format can be structured, semi-structured or open, depending on the needs of the organisation. Questionnaires are used to rec-

ord the experiences of the participants in the structured and semi-structured techniques.

"Organisational problems will be there as long as organisations exist" emphasises Swastika. So instead of trouble-shooting, she focuses on processes and terms her work as "process work". She feels that Indian organisations are realising the importance of process work, slowly but surely. Process work helps organisations to cope with problems effi-

ciently, as per Gestalt theories.

Psycho drama is another word used for such experimental learning based process work. In every drama there are actors, directors and prompters - what is unique about psycho drama is that the actors are the audience too. In this case, employees who play a key role in processes which are vital to the smooth running of an organisation are the actors.

"My role as a trainer is to experience what the other person is going through and being able to articulate that what he is not

able to state, that what has lain dormant and that what is not known to the participants themselves", she says.

The drama begins with each participant giving a brief background about themselves. Then they are asked to recount experiences which have left a deep impact on their minds. The trainer actively listens to all these experiences and articulates what some trainees are unable to express, bringing out what is lying dormant. "Such intense experiential learning affects trainers also. I believe in the healing touch of humanness and that is

played by these key players in the psycho drama. Identify the real issues affecting process work and deal with these issues using the systems theory.

Swastika spends her mornings on conceptual issues. After every workshop, she spends time on evolution of her programmes, new themes and where to go from there. She analyses the perceptions and insights each programme has given her, in order to learn from experience. She's a trainer who practices what she preaches.

Her work involves travelling and she's a firm believer that people don't have to be slave-driven to work. A lot of her time is spent identifying and analysing the organisational systems, psychological issues, and organisational issues and like many of her corporate clients, she believes in the systems approach.

"Process work is as different from counselling as attached is different from detached", says Swastika. "Psycho drama attempts to evoke participants than provoke them and is not a technique" claims Swastika.

"My focus is not on consequences and solutions are not an ideal way of working. Today there is need for a different outlook", ends Swastika.

AVOCATION / Psycho dramatist

the direction I have set for myself" comments Swastika.

The trainer has a pivotal role: he/she has to direct the drama by keeping the focus on important issues and maintaining an ambience of faith and trust. No elaborate props or sets are used. The duration may be six to eight hours over one to three days.

If there is more than one trainer, they get together at the end of the drama, focus on issues identified by the organisation, analyse the role of the key players in these processes and after getting a clear idea of the roles