

## Life & Style » Society

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### Chartering a cause

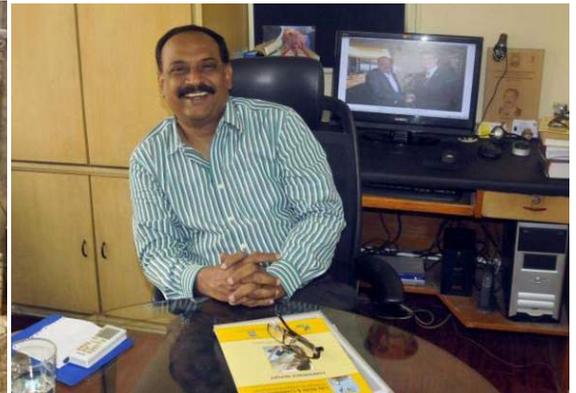
S.B. Vijaya Mary



Ravi K Reddy shows off one of the multistage micro water filtration demonstration units  
PHOTO: K. RAMESH BABU



Pursuing a rural dream: Ravi K. Reddy of REEDS (Rural Economic and Educational Development Society) PHOTO: K. RAMESH BABU



Joy of giving: Ravi K. Reddy at work PHOTO: K. RAMESH BABU

*Campaigning for the cause of rural welfare, entrepreneurship and livelihood promotion, Chartered Accountant-turned 'rural activist' Ravi Kumar Reddy Somavarapu rolls out his plan of action.*

If one cares to give a human face to a hardcore practising Chartered Accountant's passion for a cause, it could well be Ravi Kumar Reddy's. As a successful Business Advisory Consultant, Ravi Reddy helped many big investors succeed in their ventures. An enviable lifestyle and professional satisfaction notwithstanding, Ravi Reddy found himself restless in his comfort zone. The trigger was the scenario in rural India which Ravi often visited to meet his wealthy clients. "Call it paying back to society or whatever, most of my friends who were successful in their own professions were involved in some rural uplift programme. It dawned on me during interaction with people that my skill could be of help to small and medium entrepreneurs, something which I always wanted to do. That's how I set out to work in rural areas, initially with an aim to work towards entrepreneurship," reveals Ravi Reddy who eventually became the main force behind REEDS (Rural Economic and Education Development Society).

Today REEDS is involved in formulating and implementing programmes related to various spheres of rural life in India with the objective of ensuring improved quality of life for rural population.

Catching up with him at his modest Lakdi-ka-pul office, which doubles up as a Chartered Accountancy firm and a hub of activity for REEDS, on a sultry evening, one finds his staff working unfazed by the heat. "My bread and butter is chartered accountancy," Ravi informs and as he follows our eyes spotting a sticker saying 'wash you hands', he explains, "Promoting the use of toilets among schoolchildren, creating awareness on washing hands at right times was part of a campaign on hygiene education in schools, which we undertook among 300,000 school children in more than 7,000 schools in eight districts of our State."

Don't we have ministries and local administrators to handle such schemes? "Government assessments work according to per capita income calculations. As a result many villages are left out of such schemes. That's where we step in."

REEDS' interventions have now touched sanitation, hygiene education, safe drinking water, rural entrepreneurship & livelihood promotion, rain water harvesting, skills development and evaluation studies.

A REEDS' highpoint is when they introduced low-cost and easy-to-maintain 'multi-stage Micro Water filtration System at 80

locations in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka. The combined capacity is about 50 million litres of safe drinking water treatment per day covering 6 lakh people in rural areas. Basara is one such place. Pilgrims who've been to this abode of Goddess Saraswati since last year vouch for the safe drinking water facility available there, courtesy REEDS' Mobile Units.

REEDS' extensive involvement in the area of sanitation in the State has won him many laurels. "In India we have more phones than toilets," Ravi Reddy rues. Working to deal with this discrepancy, REEDS has successfully carried Total Sanitation Campaign at 55 Gram Panchayats in Khammam District. Winning the prestigious national award, 'Nirmal Gram Puraskar 2008' for 36 out of 55 Panchayats was a laudable achievement for REEDS.

Apart from providing required services, Ravi Reddy is associated with studies and evaluation related to the socio-economic development sector. He has evaluated over 1000 NGP applicants in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu for pre-eligibility and eligibility for Nirmal Gram Pursakar awards since 2008 for Department of Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and Andhra Pradesh State Water & Sanitation Mission.

In December 2010, when Ravi Reddy co-organised an international conference on Life Skills and Livelihood Skills it was inaugurated by former President of India Abdul Kalam. The conference, the first of its kind, explored skill development to empower rural sector. "Why do we insist on youth attaining degrees and thus create an unemployed force? I am totally against it. Instead, equipping rural workforce with appropriate skills is bound to yield results for the country," Ravi reasons.

Towards that end, REEDS has established partnership with relevant institutions including Australian Council for Private Education and Training and Ministry of Labour & Employment, AP.

Ravi Reddy readily admits that the road to his 'rural realisation' has too many branches. "I'd like to bring all our programmes under one umbrella so that they function better. But that's no big issue," he smiles.

Indeed. No issues as long as he continues to make a difference to life in rural India.

### **Water way to development**

More than a billion people lack access to clean water and four out of every five live in the rural areas of the developing world. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals aim to improve this situation by 2015. REEDS, while addressing this issue, has designed and introduced a state-of-the-art Multi-stage Micro Water Filtration System, which has been evaluated by relevant agencies as suitable for its effectiveness, efficiency and adaptability in rural communities. Now, over six lakh people in the vallages of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka enjoy safe drinking water where these Units are installed.

Keywords: [rural activist](#), [REEDS](#), [NGO](#)

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