

'Way to Convince People about an Idea is to Explain to Them How it Will Help Them'

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Like a lot of students, Naga Sravan Kilaru wanted to make a difference. He started a 'Save Kengeri Lake' movement in Bengaluru. He spent time off from classes getting 5,000 youngsters to hit the streets of Vijayawada to campaign for the Lokpal movement. All of this, while hitting textbooks thicker than a volume of *The Lord of The Rings* to clear his engineering exams. But here's what separates an optimistic do-gooder from a visionary.

"I realised just marching down roads won't yield results. Change will only sustain when there is a change in the mind sets of people," recalls the 22-year-old. And how do you do that? For Sravan, the answer was 'policy making.' So he found himself a scholarship and flew out to Washington DC for a course on just that.

Since then, he's set up Political Quotient, a consultancy firm that offers research-driven and technology-enabled solutions for that go as high up as the Andhra Pradesh Youth Welfare Minister, K Atchannaaidu! And 'Vijayawada Needs You', an NGO he set up way back in college to do clean-ups around the city has evolved to include a Youth Parliament with students from diverse backgrounds speaking up on a multitude of social issues. Except now, Sravan adds, it doesn't stop there. "Students give their perspectives of what needs to be done, the reports are submitted to the government," he shares. He is an engineer by profession, but his mind is on contributing to the development of society, which he believes is only possible with voluntary efforts of youth.

During the vacation after completing his intermediate course from Narayana College, he was waiting to join R V College of Engineering, Sravan, attracted by the Lokpal movement, formed an organisation – Youth of India and campaigned for the Lokpal bill. Along with his friends, he began going from college to college to explain the objective of Lokpal. He succeeded in making around 5000 youth in Vijayawada take to the streets in support of Lokpal.

When he joined college in Bengaluru, he continued with the Lokpal movement and worked as part of Team Anna, but one year down the line, he thought, just marching on the roads won't yield results, since people are not really aware of what Lokpal is. "It is various aspects of the policy, be it Lokpal or any other, that need to be explained to the people and how it is going to impact their lives. The only way to convince the people about an idea is to explain to them how it will help them," he says.

The four years in Bengaluru made Sravan more determined to engage youth for the betterment of society, starting from the immediate environs. He was the president of RISE (Revolutionising

India through Social Empowerment) that started 'Save Kengeri Lake' movement, which hit the headlines for a long time in Bengaluru. Objective was to save the lake, near their college, which has become a massive dumping yard. "There were ups and downs, but our sustained efforts had resulted in BMRCL taking up the revival of the lake as part of its CSR activities," he explains. "But, the change would only sustain, when there is change in mind-set of the people, which is only possible through policy making. VnU organised Youth Assembly, Youth Parliament with students from diverse backgrounds to give their perspective of what is needed to be done and the reports were submitted to the government," he says. Sravan, who was more interested in policy making, did policy for Young Leaders from Centre for Civil Society and later did diploma from the Cato Institute, an American libertarian think tank based in Washington DC on FB scholarship.

When all this wasn't enough, he went old school and started going to colleges to inspire youth to get actively involved in policy making since it is ultimately they who would benefit. He had even suggested a youth commission at state-level.