Philanthropy should be humble, but not modest. Rohini Nilekani

To understand philanthropy, it is important to view it from the welfare state's perspective. In a healthy society, the welfare state is responsible for ensuring that no one is left behind. In a society where the state is unable to deliver the welfare it promises, philanthropy comes to the rescue. It fills up the gap that the state has failed to fill, and this is a legitimate role for philanthropy.

For over a century, philanthropy has been funded by the elite in India. In recent times, we have seen a broadening of the pool of philanthropists, and in particular, the entry of the new generation of the super-rich into the space of giving. Some have come into wealth independently, while others have come into wealth due to the sale of technology firms.

There is a lot of work ahead, because otherwise civil society organisations will go under. And while that might seem like a positive thing for the donor, it is in fact a very negative thing for the people who have come into wealth and are trying to experiment with giving more freely. There is a need for more skill, more dialogue, and more understanding of the limits of giving, in order for donors to get to a place where they understand the limits of the welfare state and are prepared to do more.

This is an urgent call for investment in the welfare state itself. It is not good enough to support resilience.

Looking into the future, there are a couple of changes required. First, the policy environment needs to be more enabling and open. Everyone has to be a part of this conversation, from the government to civil society organisations.

Second, as these new philanthropists come in, we need to build a more robust, diverse pool of donors. We cannot support your office rent or even give you an accountant. So as these young philanthropists come in, we need to build an ecosystem in which they can learn to be philanthropists.

Third, civil society organisations need to get their act together in a sustainable manner to represent their stakeholders. The new generation of youngsters that is becoming wealthy has no legacy to uphold; it can think completely afresh, just like we did when Infosys shareholders came into wealth and a few others around us in the recent past.

As we step out of the shadow of the pandemic, we see that the philanthropic organisations have had to change how they work. Those working in water, in education, sanitation, agriculture, and other areas had to shift their focus and find new ways to reach their beneficiaries. We are in the second phase of the pandemic, but we need to learn from the first phase and build up a more robust system of investment.

It is important to keep in mind that the philanthropic organisations have to keep their budgets relatively flexible to be able to respond to changes. For example, sanitation, agriculture, education, and other areas had to shift their focus and find new ways to reach their beneficiaries. It is important to keep in mind that the philanthropic organisations have to keep their budgets relatively flexible to be able to respond to changes.

The new generation of philanthropists has a different approach to giving. They think of giving not just in terms of the impact they can make, but also in terms of the people they can work with. They are looking at giving in mixed ways, both for profit and for societal impact. This is a different approach to giving, and it is important that we learn from it.

The new generation of philanthropists is more willing to experiment with giving more freely and afresh, just like we did when Infosys shareholders came into wealth and a few others around us in the recent past. They are looking at giving in mixed ways, both for profit and for societal impact. This is a different approach to giving, and it is important that we learn from it.

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