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David Pembroke: Hello ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to InTransition, the podcast that examines the practise of content communication in government and the public sector. My name is David Pembroke, and thank you very much for joining us today. Today we are going to go to India to speak to a very accomplished gentleman who is not only interested and involved in the WPP government public sector survey that we've spoken about a number of times on this project but has a distinguished career with the Bharti Foundation. We'll come to Mr. Vijay Chadda in just a moment but before we get to that interview, we start as we do each week with the definition of content communication as it relates to government and public sector.

So, content communication is a strategic, measurable and accountable business process that relies on the creation, curation and distribution of useful, relevant and consistent content. The purpose is to engage and inform a specific audience in order to achieve a desired citizen and/or stakeholder reaction. So that's what we're talking about today with Mr. Vijay Chadda who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Bharti Foundation, which is the development arm of Bharti Enterprises, which is one of India's leading business groups with interests in telecoms, agribusiness, financial services, retail, real estate, communication and media devices. Mr. Chadda, through his experience, clear vision and strategic thinking, has also been able to establish a successful and replicable model of public-private partnerships. The Satya Bharti School Programme provides free, quality education to over 42,000 children from marginalised communities in rural areas through its 254 schools, 249 primary and elementary and five senior secondary schools across six Indian states.

Under Mr. Chadda's leadership, learnings and best practises of the Satya Bharti School Programme have been taken to the government schools. He has guided the organisation to broaden its scope from running its own schools to engaging deeply with the government and mentoring government schools to enhance the quality of education through needs-based interventions. Mr. Chadda has over 40 years of professional experience in many different fields. He served in the Indian Army for 20 years. He was a graduate from the National Defence Academy in India and also has served at the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College in Toronto, Canada. Mr. Chadda has completed his Master of Science in Defence Studies from the Madras University and he has served on the board of significant travel and tourism associations and various national committees in the areas of education, skill development and corporate social responsibility, and he joins me this afternoon all the way from New Delhi. Mr. Vijay Chadda, thanks very much for joining us on InTransition.

Vijay Chadda: Good afternoon, David. It's a great pleasure to be with you today.

David Pembroke: You've been busy. You've had a wonderful career.

Vijay Chadda: Yes. I mean it's 45 years now and many facets to that. The armed forces, which I'm in ... It's similar across the world and then a corporate career spanning over

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15 years and then the transition into what I call the social and development sector.

David Pembroke: Now we'll come to the WPP research programme that you're involved in but I'm intrigued and interested by someone like you. What has been the secret of your success? How have you been able to get people to follow you and to be able to accomplish and achieve things?

Vijay Chadda: That's a difficult question because I really never believed that I was so successful but I guess it's a question of ... My policies in life have been never compromise on your credibility, be transparent, as a leader, never expect your team to do what you would not do yourself, and lead by example.

David Pembroke: They're very military sort of doctrines, aren't they?

Vijay Chadda: Absolutely but I would believe ... Considering that my corporate and civil career now is a little bit heavier than my military career, I would believe that these are equally applicable in all walks of life. A leader must be seen to be someone that people can trust, people can believe in and has credibility.

David Pembroke: So this notion of trust is often thrown around and people talk about it but what does it mean to you to be able to have someone to trust you?

Vijay Chadda: Well I guess I would look at it the other way. If I believe that I'm the person that I am and my team trusts me, I would sleep well at night. I won't have sleepless nights.

David Pembroke: And that's going back to those principles of never compromising, being transparent, being authentic and believing in people as well.

Vijay Chadda: Absolutely, yes. Trust is never a one-way street. Trust is two ways. I can't expect people to trust me if I don't trust them. That's also been one of the things that I've always believed in. If I have a team and if I work with them, I have complete trust in them until ... Unless something crops up and I need to check on them, I would believe that I will have complete faith in my team.

David Pembroke: And how do you build that confidence that your team will do the right thing? How do you set them up for success?

Vijay Chadda: I guess that's many small things which come together. The clear thing is that you must have a shared vision and a common goal, that you are working towards the same objective. You must have an agreement on the means that you will use to achieve that end. I guess then you start putting all the other things together depending on what the task at hand is.

David Pembroke: And how do you maintain momentum when things aren't going well, when the difficult times arrive?

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Vijay Chadda: Yes of course. That is always a challenging part in life and that is something that none of us can go away from. Life is full of challenges and the issue is that you must be prepared for it, you must know that challenges will come and if you carry on doing the right things and do things right, you will overcome challenges. That's again using ... Going back to my army days when I used to be in the commandos, you say, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

David Pembroke: But the military does invest a lot of time and effort, don't they, in terms of those basic principles and really pounding them into people over many, many years through lots of repetition, lots of stress, lots of examples, lots of best practise. It takes time to build credibility and trust in teams.

Vijay Chadda: I guess the military is an organisation where you just come into a culture, so it's not that too much effort has to be put into you, it's just that you come into an institution, a culture where a lot of these things are taken for granted and obviously you keep learning over time, you mature over time. But when I got my commission after my four years of training in the National Defence Academy, I was all of 20 years old and suddenly you line up and you're responsible for the lives of 50 people who you lead and you are one of 20 officers in a battalion of 900 soldiers and the responsibility is thrust on you and it's incumbent upon you to deliver. You have very little choice. You have to succeed.

David Pembroke: And it's interesting, isn't it? Often many business ... Sorry, people who've had that training in the military go on to having very successful careers in business. Why is that?

Vijay Chadda: I think one ... Like I said, the fundamentals of being of leadership, the fundamentals of managing a team ... Of course, in the military you lead a team and when you give a word of command, they're ready to die. You say, "That's where you will be stationed," and the person knows that that would mean that 9 out of 10 times he will not come back alive, or you would be shot up, he would still do it but ... In civvy street, it's a little different but yet you are asking people to do things not all of which may be something by which they would benefit. It may be for organisation benefit. It might not be for personal gain. So leadership trades the requirements of getting people to believe in you, to have faith in you, they remain the same. So if you transition that and bring that back to civvy street ... Of course, you have to do a lot of unlearning and new learnings, you just don't apply it like a template, but these remain as key traits within you and if you can live by them, imbibe them and make sure that your team also believes in them.

So when you come out, there is a little bit of selling that you need to do. In the military, we take a lot of things for granted. So I don't have to really ... I lead by example but I don't have to tell my soldier that this is what is expected out of him but when you come out to civvy street, then obviously you've got to engage with your team, you've got to share things with them. Each individual is different. They're not all wearing the same uniform. They don't all come from

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the same background like our troops would come from the same region and would have the same culture and mindset by and large. So I guess these are the challenges that you've got to address.

David Pembroke: Yeah, it's interesting. Before we come to the WPP research, and I do want to talk about that in a minute, but there's a couple of other things I'm interested in. The Bharti Foundation which is part of the development arm of Bharti Enterprises and it seems to be a characteristic of many of these major Indian conglomerates that they have this ... It's almost like a social contract. As part of the right to engage in telecom, agribusiness, financial services, communication, media devices as the Bharti Enterprises does, that they do have this social obligation to give back to the community. Is that something peculiar to India that you've found?

Vijay Chadda: In a sense, yes, David, because in the Indian culture, giving has been a way of life; philanthropy, charity. So it's been an age-old tradition. So people have always been giving. May not necessarily be the right way. I'm not sure I subscribe to people going to temples or places of worship and donating money and saying that, "We are giving offerings to God," but that's always been happening. Large industrial conglomerates like the Tatas and the Birlas who are ... Have a century old tradition behind them. Wherever they've set up business establishments, there is always a social content to that in terms of setting up a school or a hospital or doing something for the needy there.

So it's been part of culture. It's just that post 1991 after liberalisation happened in India and the globalisation started happening, corporate structured processes systems came into being. You started looking at things in a far more professional manner. Family-run businesses transition into becoming professionally run. And then came these ... Where earlier the social part would be done by the owners themselves probably, by the families, today they felt that even philanthropy or doing social good needed to be run in a business-like manner, it needed to be accountable to the stakeholders, the receivers, the contributors, the donors, as well as the people involved in it, hence the formation of corporate foundations.

David Pembroke: Yeah. And so the investors that ... The market invested ... Public market investors in India are quite happy for the investments that are made into these foundations because that seems a bit ... Certainly I know in this part of the world that yes, OK, to a point but these are quite substantial businesses that are developed that deliver the social good.

Vijay Chadda: Actually, David, actually since 2013 there's been a paradigm change in this but even prior to that when the major stakeholders would spend money on philanthropy, the other shareholders or stakeholders would not look at it negatively. It was always viewed positively. But that was being done voluntarily. But the interesting part is I'm not sure if you're aware that since 2013 the new companies that came into being in India wherein for corporates offer certain

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size and scale and profitability, spending 2% of their net profit is recommended but almost near-mandated.

David Pembroke: Yeah, right.

Vijay Chadda: ... corporate social responsibility.

David Pembroke: OK.

Vijay Chadda: So today, you are actually expected to spend that money and so the issue of feeling bad doesn't arise because it's almost part of legislation that you will spend that money. So while no one is checking how much you spend but you're supposed to report every year, so there are guidelines clearly on how that money will be spent, which are the projects and how they will be monitored, how every companies' board will have a special board for CSR activities, how accountable it is with rest ... Within the corporate in terms of the money spent, in terms of the monitoring, in terms of the choosing of projects. So all this has happened in the last three years.

David Pembroke: Now is this because the need is so great and the government doesn't have the resources to do these things?

Vijay Chadda: I guess yes and no. Obviously the government has resources. The Indian economy has been doing well, the Indian government has resources. They spend a lot of money but I guess it's more about how well the money is spent, David. So people in government believe that if corporates were to get on to do the same job, they would probably do it better than just government executing this. The impact would be greater, larger and sustainability would be built into the process.

David Pembroke: OK. So is there a favourable tax treatment to this money that's committed to corporate social responsibility?

Vijay Chadda: Unfortunately not.

David Pembroke: OK. Now listen, this sort of moves us down towards this path of ... This discussion around government communication and your participation in the Global Advisory Board to the WPP research. Just as a sort of opening remark, how well does the Indian government communicate with citizens and stakeholders?

Vijay Chadda: David, you would understand even better than me that I would believe even in the most advanced countries of this world in terms of technology and communication and even the democratic processes, in today's world, communication is probably the biggest challenge that everyone would be facing. With the advent of social media platforms, the ability for individuals to engage, express opinion, form opinions, get content, I think there has never been a

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greater need for clear, cohesive and reliable and credible communication from the government. The Indian government obviously is trying. India unfortunately is not one country. We have many states, I think close to 40 states in India. We have hundreds of recognised languages. It's just a large country geographically. It's a large country in the number of people, close to 1.4 billion. People speaking different languages like if I don't know that language, I belong to the North of India. If I go to the South of India, if I go to states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, they all speak different languages. Even the South Indian states probably may not fully understand each other's languages.

So that's the ... There's a linguistic divide. There's a geographical extent. There is a huge cultural divide. There are many religions which are practised in India. Irrespective of what people may read, what the media tries to project, I still believe India is one of the most tolerant countries in the world. I have grown up imbibing and respecting all religions. Most of us are taught that in school. There are fundamentalists everywhere but by and large as a nation, we respect every religion. We celebrate all festivals, even in schools like ours which are in villages where very, very poor children come. We celebrate Islamic festivals, we celebrate Hindu festivals, we celebrate Sikh festivals, we celebrate Christmas and New Year, we have a holiday on Good Friday.

So we are a very diverse and a multicultural and a tolerant nation, so don't believe everything that you read or hear. You've got to come and experience India for yourself and keeping that in mind, so that's another challenge as to how you communicate with everyone and the most important thing is the economic divide. You have some of the richest people in the world living in India and you have some of the poorest people in the world in India also and there are many tiers leading from the bottom to the top. So the challenge for the government ... Any government is huge because ... And the challenge for anyone to come and look at India is huge because you are probably dealing with something bigger than Europe in terms of size and definitely much more in terms of diversity.

David Pembroke: I think I need to have a-

Vijay Chadda: Sorry, David. Sorry. I'm so sorry. My apologies.

David Pembroke: I think I need to go and have a lie down. Where do you start? Where do you start with something like that? Obviously there are the existing systems that have grown up over hundreds and hundreds of years and obviously technology is having an impact but the way information is moved around India to influence these particular groups in the different parts of the country, they've grown up over time. So how is technology changing those established networks and systems that are in place? And what principles are being in place to perhaps take the goodness and the benefit of new technologies in order to strengthen these communities and improve the welfare of citizens?

Vijay Chadda:

Great. David, I'm not sure if you're aware but our Prime Minister has made a statement and it's carrying on now. He's spoken of digital India. He said that's his dream. We had a demonetisation in November of last year where the large currency notes became illegal tender and they all had to be surrendered. New notes came in but that all switched to digitization. Encouragement of using ... Going digital in terms of cash transactions, looking for a cashless economy. So while that is happening, we are looking at digital in terms of communication also. Government is looking at eTenders, they are looking at making everything on the e platforms, giving information, availability.

Today most of our ... Where we would stand in queues to pay our electricity and telephone bills in the not-so-recent past, today most of these payments are made online. People are using digital cash. When I say people, I'm not talking of people like us, the English speaking and the English school educated Indian elite but I'm talking of the normal farmer or the normal daily wage earner in India. They all have mobile phones. They all can access digital. They have smartphones. They look at Whatsapp some of ... A lot of them. My own driver and my ... We have the luxury in India, we still have chauffeurs, we still have maids and my maid's children ... It's not a bad thing. They go to school, they are smart, they are on Facebook.

So that's how India is changing. That's how India is changing and the government is encouraging it. A lot of ministers in government are on Twitter, so that communication is happening. Not always right but Twitter handles are very, very active. All prominent politicians including our Prime Minister make great use of it. Our Prime Minister speaks every month to the nation over radio. That is something we had forgotten. Suddenly it has become a great medium of communication. It's called Mann Ki Baat, that is... What is in his mind and he speaks to ... He is actually addressing the larger India, the rural India, the India that most ... When we talk of India, most of us look at our India, the urban India but 80% of India is still rural India, still the farmers of India.

David Pembroke:

So when you were participating in this global research project around the state of global communication, what sort of reflections did you have when you were looking at the state of government communication globally and what were some of the things that you were looking at that you thought perhaps this could be very useful for India?

Vijay Chadda:

Well I mean I didn't get too much of an exposure into what others are saying but as far as India is concerned, I do believe that one, digitization and secondly to really restore ... I'm saying restore ... I'm not even saying build up, the credibility of our media. Somewhere or the other in the last half a decade or a decade or so, media in India has gradually eroded its credibility. So a lot of people don't know what to believe. They believe that it's sensationalism more than accuracy in terms of reporting. They believe that sometimes the right news is not reported. It may not necessarily be suppressed or twisted but you decide

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to report something else which gives a totally different impression. All these television debates that happen in India which everyone watches.

We have a multitude of news channels, I would say hundreds of news channels, they've just ... There are regional channels all over. There are channels in the national language which is Hindi which is ... And a large number of channels in English and everyone is on TV saying something or the other and most of these people are politicians and ... Or they are people who believe in one line of politics or the other. So the general public in India I would say is ... Either just does not believe or gets confused, so there is a huge challenge on governments in authority to actually make sure that relevant communication remains credible and people at least hear what they are supposed to hear and hear right and not just what the government or politicians want them to hear.

David Pembroke: Are the people listening though? Or are they ... Have they turned off because they don't believe? Because as you say, they don't trust the source that they're hearing it from, so perhaps they're less engaged in those traditional media platforms and perhaps consuming much more content through Facebook, through Twitter, through Whatsapp and through those alternative platforms that they can now source the information that they do want to listen to.

Vijay Chadda: I would believe that sometimes people do get turned off ... I'm not sure I watch too many news channels. I still remember the newspaper or credible news reports. If I have nothing else to do then maybe I will look at anything beyond the headlines on a news channel but I think the same is happening to a lot of people but yes, they do listen. The other media are becoming more and more relevant but it's not necessary that they carry again credibility because messages just get passed on and as they keep getting passed on, people start believing that and a lot of time, social media platforms in India, being the country that we are, we are going through a phase of growth. We obviously are suffering the pains of growth. We are a large country so we have issues everywhere because of the disparities, the economic disparities specifically. There are people who have issues over religion. There are people who have issues over ... We have insurgencies going on in India in the North East in Kashmir.

We don't have friendly neighbours, unfortunately. So we are one of those nations which ... Unlike Australia which doesn't have that problem because you don't have neighbours, you have the sea all around you. And the United States which has only Mexico and Canada. So we have China and we have Pakistan who we can clearly call not friends and then we have Bangladesh which again could swing either way. And then there is Nepal and Sri Lanka which are friendly still but by and large our major neighbours are not friendly, so we have ... As a nation, there are a lot of issues that we have to contend with and that's the reason why the challenge of communication for us is even greater. These segments that you have to communicate with, you want to make sure the message gets through to everyone. The disparities, both economic, language,



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cultural, the divides. And then the fact that we are a democracy, it's not only ... The center's writ doesn't run everywhere. We have state governments and there are many state governments who are satraps and then who say that, "We will do what we want to." So it's a great country and we are going through the learning curve.

David Pembroke: Yeah, indeed. Now just a quick final question before I let you go, you've been involved in various national committees in the area of education and skill development. How well are the Indian universities and technical colleges preparing the Indian students to be effective communicators?

Vijay Chadda: I really won't say I have enough knowledge to comment on that, David. I've not gone through the details of university. My focus has primarily remained around school education and in most of these committees; we've been focusing on how ... We have a very, very large government schooling structure. We have 1.4 million schools across India. That's government schools where children get free education. Access is there, infrastructure is there. One of the greatest challenges that we have in terms of government schools is the quality of the schooling and the perception of government schools and in all these committees, we actually look at how ... I've been involved primarily in looking at quality of school education, improvement around that, looking at improvement in the government schooling system and skill development of youth.

As far as communication is concerned, I'm sure the universities will be doing good work because we have some world-class universities. And we have some excellent partnerships. For example, even the Bharti Foundation has a School of Public Policy in what we call the Indian School of Business and our partner in the School of Public Policy is Fletcher of Tufts University, so a lot of global universities have their presence in India through partnerships. A lot of Indian universities and technical institutes like the Indian Institute of Technology, the Indian Institutes of Management, are recognised globally as great institutions. So I would believe that surely justice is being done there as far as orienting students to communication and its challenges are concerned.

David Pembroke: I'm sure, I'm sure there would be. So Vijay Chadda, thank you very much for joining us this afternoon. I think it's a fascinating insight into a country that perhaps we don't pay enough attention to and we don't educate ourselves enough to understand the complexities and the challenges. As you say, as you observed before, particularly here in Australia we are very, very fortunate. We don't have many of the day-to-day challenges that you do have but you seem, like many Indian people I meet, to be ... Have that wonderful optimism about you and a zest for life and obviously a great appreciation of the privilege that you've had and the contribution that you're continuing to make there to the Indian community through the Bharti Foundation. So thank you very much for spending a bit of time with us this afternoon, I greatly appreciate it.

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Vijay Chadda: Thank you, David. It's been a pleasure being with you and let me wear my tourism hat now and say that to all those who are part of this programme, come and visit India. Come and see India for yourself.

David Pembroke: No, I promise I will and when I do, I'll make sure I come and look you up as well because I'd-

Vijay Chadda: It will be a pleasure, David.

David Pembroke: Would love to-

Vijay Chadda: We'll remain in touch, thank you.

David Pembroke: Would love to have dinner, so thank you very much to Vijay Chadda for spending a bit of time with us this afternoon discussing the challenges ... Can you just imagine when you sit back and think of your communication challenges, imagine sitting at the heart of the Indian government trying to deal with all of that. I wish them every best wish in the world because that sounds to me to be a vast challenge but as I say, the stoicism, the credibility, the integrity of people like Mr. Chadda making such a great contribution there, so a great thanks to him today to spending just a little bit of time with us today and to you, the listener. Thank you very much for tuning in again this week and we'll be back at the same time next week with another fascinating guest from the world of government content communication but for the moment, it's bye for now.