

11

DEC, 18

PATRICK SAN FRANCESCO,

PHILANTHROPY, SAMARPAN

FOUNDATION

## Piecing together humanitarian Patrick San Francesco

BY TEJASWI SUBRAMANIAN



Humanitarian Patrick San Francesco.

Since he was a child, Patrick San Francesco has been called a healer. It began when his brother fell so sick that everybody thought he was going to die. Four-year-old San Francesco thought that it was God's job to keep him alive and healthy. So like any young child, he decided to take matters into his own hands, trudged into the garden and shouted at the sky.

“What's wrong with you!” he yelled. “My brother is sick; fix him. It's your job!”

He then returned to his brother's bedside and told him that he had spoken to God, and that he would be fine very soon. By what could only be described as a miracle, his brother was better by that very evening! Soon, this routine of helping sick people get better by chiding God into doing his job became a large part of Patrick's life.

### WHAT IS QRIUS

Broaden your horizons as unpack fresh trends shaping our lives. Qrius delivers fresh, immersive writing that answers the question 'Why should I care?'



### DAILY UPDATES IN YOUR INBOX

Start your mornings with the acclaimed 'Qrius Mornings' newsletter that gives you our best article of the day right in your inbox.

### FEATURED ARTICLES

1

NGOS

The social sector is plagued by funding and organisational crises. Here's how to resolve them

2

CLOUD COMPUTING

Move over, Cloud! Fog Computing is the new force behind the Internet of Things

Eventually, people began to say, if you're sick, go to Patrick, he talks to God. Most days after school, I would go to heal people as a child. I thought God was a slacker and I had to remind him of his job of looking after people. It never occurred to me that I was the only one who was able to do this."

## What does a healer do in the real world?

Considering such a remarkable childhood, during which his healing powers were acknowledged by those around him, it surprised me that he went on to become a stock market analyst ["A greedy one at that," San Francesco chimes in]. When I asked him about it, he clarifies: "I didn't really give much importance to my intuition. I pinned making good investment calls to being smart, but I was probably just using my energy in the wrong way. I had this power to heal and the universe wanted me to stop wasting it away in the stock market."

And how exactly did the universe let him know if its intentions? Flashback to October 19, 1987, just a day after San Francesco's 30th birthday: it was the Black Monday, when the stock market crashed across the globe. "I lost everything in that. Every dollar I had became minus 17 cents. It dawned upon me that financial wealth was not the 'true richness' that I was looking for, which comes from being happy and kind to other people. That's when I decided to focus completely on the healing aspect of my life."

"But you were so good at your job, how did you resist the temptation of going back into it and making up for your losses?" I probed.

"I was considered pretty smart at the time by my peers. Yet, I didn't see the crash coming. The universe had been tapping me on my shoulder for a long time, and it had now decided to give me one tight slap. Instead of turning to the whiskey bottle or becoming depressed, the loss actually made me feel so liberated. So instead of spending my life on the phone with people around the world, deciding on what stocks to buy and sell, I started spending my time bringing smiles to people's faces!"

## From healing to philanthropy

Nonetheless, the journey from being a healer to becoming a globally-renowned philanthropist who has presented his ideas at the United Nations Academic Impact Symposium could not have been easy, right? Not for San Francesco, who established [Samarpan Foundation](#) as a vehicle for people to give back to the society.

"When people were healed, many would come to me and say,

**RAJASTHAN ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2018**

Now that Congress has returned to Rajasthan, kaun baneja CM?

society? We don't know how to go about it.' That's why we opened Samarpan Foundation."

### Patrick San Francesco at United Nations Academic Impa...



Through the foundation, San Francesco has been a voracious philanthropist for over a decade now. "I am not a civil engineer, but I go about solving construction problems anyway. There's no such thing as expert knowledge! Everything boils down to common sense. I invented the [bottle house model](#)—it was just common sense. Plastic bottles don't go away and that's a curse; let's make it into a building that doesn't go away. No one person is more qualified than another to find a solution. Thinking like that will just make you find limitations everywhere. Inventing, improvising, innovating—if a problem has come your way, you have the capacity to heal the situation."

Samarpan Malawi has recently completed the world's first two-story charitable maternity hospital constructed entirely out of PET plastic bottles and nylon fishnet. The hospital will address the dire need for maternity care in the community of Chinsapo, Lilongwe. Samarpan South Africa has also recently completed a crèche and adult education center in the small rural locality of Dutywa, Northern Cape employing this unique building method.

## Dew-catchers and wholesome foods: San Francesco's other inventions

This is not the only issue that Patrick has tackled through his work at Samarpan. "Recently, there was a Level 6 drought in South Africa. I came up with a simple model called dew-catcher. They have cut down all the trees, so we need dew-catchers now. I made it using waste plastic and some wire... just like upside-down umbrellas. I put it around the saplings, so they can be nourished by the water collected. We started to sell that product in South Africa. Hopefully, the new trees will be allowed to do their work and we'll not have droughts anymore."

hunger. Patrick and his team are currently keeping it under wraps as they look for the right platform to launch it. “I don’t want people to make money off it. It is a completely balanced food that costs nothing and is found everywhere in the world. I haven’t figured out the platform to launch it yet, and that’s what I am spending my days thinking about.” This ‘whole food’ has undergone nutritional testing in a laboratory in the USA and is proven to fulfil the RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) as per US standards.

## On climate change and spirituality

Given the alarming urgency of climate change in the wake of the [Incheon report](#), I asked San Francesco if he had given the issue any thought. “I am approaching it from two angles – plant more trees and create thicker foliage. Also, I am thinking about reversing the wastage that happens in the form of greenhouse gases. I’m looking for a way to reverse that waste product back to fuel. If something can go forward, it can go backwards too – I’m thinking of its chemistry.”

Above all, Patrick is a spiritual healer. How does he nourish that part of himself? How does he describe the path that he chooses to follow?

“My religion is people. People ask me, Patrick – that’s a Christian name, but you come from a Hindu country? My religion is every living thing—I don’t want to harm them, I don’t want to be vicious to them. Everything has a sacred place on this planet: every plant, tree, animal. I have found that human beings are the only living things capable of being vicious; we kill out of malice. It’s a kind of a slogan: Don’t just be human, be humane.”

But does he feel overwhelmed? An existential crisis perhaps, during which he felt overcome by negativity. How does he choose to respond to such situations?

“I believe that everything happens to you for a reason. My family might sometimes say that it is too much for you, it’s beyond your capacity. But I say, when you’re in a toy shop, there are games for children of different age groups. Everything that comes your way, by design, is within your capacity. If it has come your way, just keep quiet and think of a solution. Don’t play the blame game.

The beggar on the street, his problem is \$10. He doesn’t have a million dollar problem. That’s his capacity for problems, and life will rarely throw him anything larger than that.”

*senior sub editor at Qrius.*