

# A THREE WHEELED REVOLUTION-

## Interview with IRFAN ALAM

Irfan Alam, an internationally acclaimed entrepreneur is a man with a difference. He has deviated from the usual path of corporate business mentality to a socially responsible entrepreneurship.

During his teenage years, he started Stock Trade Analysis and won a famous reality show, “Business Baazigar” in which he contested with a business proposal. The main idea behind the proposal was to organize the rickshaw sector and make it a profitable venture. He suggested on redesigning rickshaws and equipping it with music, newspapers, first aid kits, refreshments and advertisements. It created a revolution in the rickshaw sector. He was invited for the Presidential Entrepreneurship summit 2010 and Obama complimented him with the words as “you are doing a tougher job than me”.

The real journey to his success began with water. When he was seventeen years old, he hired a rickshaw on a summer afternoon. He was thirsty. He asked the rickshaw puller whether he would provide him water. He answered him that there was no such provision because he did not have money to buy and stack them. That moment made him to think about the plight of the rickshaw pullers. Thus in 2007, Samman was formed to organize and empower the rickshaw pulling industry under one shade and thereby improving their livelihood. It started with “no funds “but an “innovative “and “special thrill” for its members. The word Samman means respect or dignity to all. Alam strongly believed to bring the marginalized to the mainstream. The first aim was to change the concept of “rent” rickshaws to “own” rickshaws. They were given training on basic etiquette and traffic rules. They were also given insurances, id cards and uniforms. The money earned through Samman. It gave them a sense of belonging and empowerment. The social venture thus became a social cause. Children of the operators and their spouses attended free evening classes called Samman Gyan. Innovative ideas like solar powered fibre glass rickshaws are a new attempt at present. The environmental friendly mode of transport has given a new identity and self-esteem to the underprivileged.

Some people enjoy success individually. There are people who are able to make others taste the fruits of their triumphs. Here Alam stands unique as a



saviour for the downtrodden. Irfan Alam founded the Sammaan Foundation. It was to modernize the rickshaw pulling sector in Bihar.

The lesson titled “A Three Wheeled Revolution” is an interview with Irfan Alam. Irfan Alam started life from very humble background. This lesson tells us how he became a successful entrepreneur. He shares the story behind his entrepreneurship. Alam was once travelling in a rickshaw. When he felt thirsty he wanted to get water from the rickshaw puller. But he could not provide water since he couldn't afford it in his rickshaw. Soon Irfan thought of a business idea. He started an agency named ‘SammaaN Foundation’. This agency plays an important role to organize the rickshaw pullers. With this agency, he could increase the living conditions of the rickshaw pullers. He used rickshaws as a source of income from advertising, music and newspapers for passengers, first aid and the selling of cold water and juice.

### POSSIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. Irfan Alam comes to your School to inaugurate the Youth Club. Prepare a script for announcement introducing him (Young Entrepreneur- founder and chairman of SammaanN Foundation- recognized as one of the top thirty Youth Icons of India by the Times of India).

Respected Principal, my dear Teachers and my loving friends,

As we all know, today we are really honoured with the living presence of young and successful entrepreneur Sri Irfan Alam to inaugurate the Youth Club of our School. He is the founder and chairman of SammaanN Foundation. His efforts to empower those at the bottom of Indian Society have been recognized widely. We became very much interested when we studied more about him from our English lesson titled, “A Three Wheeled Revolution”. He has won the Business Baazigar and the World Bank's Innovation Award. Besides he has been recognized by the Times of India as one of the Top 30 Youth Icons of India. Alam, the winner of Business World's “Hottest Young Entrepreneur” award and the TED fellowship award. He is really a source of inspiration to all of us. We are happy to say that we will contribute something for the betterment of the society. So I am very happy to welcome him to our School for inaugurating the Youth Club.

2. The R&D wing of SammaanN is planning to redesign rickshaws with necessary improvements. Think about some useful modifications that you would like to

suggest to Irfan Alam. Negotiate your ideas with your partner and make a final list of modifications.

From: neiltom@gmail.com

To: irfanalam@gmail.com

SUB: Modifying the rickshaw

Dear Irfan,

It is a matter of immense pleasure for me to know that you are planning to make some useful modifications in the rickshaws to improve their services. I would suggest the following modifications.

a) At first I would like to suggest the matter of having food items. It would help them to enjoy their journey. The travellers can be charged for the same.

b) Secondly I would like to suggest that there should be necessary arrangements to close the open part. The travellers suffer a lot from the sunlight. The roof can also be extended so that the Rickshaw puller will not be exposed to the hot sun.

c) Thirdly I would suggest improving the advertising method.

d) Finally I suggest putting music box on one side of the rickshaw.

Thanking you

Neil Tom

3. Your class has decided to conduct a group discussion on the topic “India- A Land wonder for young Entrepreneurs.” You are asked to initiate the discussion. Prepare the script of a presentation you would make on the occasion.

I agree that India is really a land wonder for young Entrepreneurs. Today, India currently has more than 48 million small businesses, double the number of the small companies here in the U.S. According to Indian government data, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) contribute nearly 8 percent of the country’s GDP, 45 percent of the manufacturing output, and 40 percent of the country’s total exports. Small businesses in India create 1.3 million jobs every year and provide the largest share of employment after agriculture. They play a significant role in the country’s GDP.



4. You have read the interview with Irfan Alam, founder and chairman of SammaaN Foundation. Prepare a blog on Irfan's ideas of entrepreneurship and the means he adopted to execute his ideas. The blog should be presented in such a way as to motivate the young budding entrepreneurs.

#### IRFAN ALAM A YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR WITH A VISION:

By Naveen Kumar      DATE:

Irfan Alam is a young entrepreneur who founded the SammaaN Foundation to modernize the rickshaw pullers in Bihar. It is really interesting to find out his ideas and visions on entrepreneurship. It is quite surprising to know his story as a successful entrepreneur. Alam once happened to travel in a rickshaw. When he asked for water, the rickshaw puller couldn't provide him as he couldn't afford it. It was at that time an idea flashed through his mind. It was the starting point of a business plan. He realized that there was a market for selling water bottles. Next day he talked to five rickshaw pullers and gave them each eight bottles of water. He told them that for every bottle they sold, he would make a profit of two rupees. This really helped rickshaw pullers to earn one rupee per bottle. This gave him much confidence. Really entrepreneurship is in his blood. He had started his first portfolio management firm at the age of 13. It means that there is no age limit for beginning a career of entrepreneurship. When he founded SammaaN Foundation, he could give proper training in traffic rules. Besides he arranged loans for the rickshaw pullers to buy their own rickshaws. This organization provide him much confidence. As students we should be hardworking and truthful to become a successful entrepreneur. The life of Irfan Alam is really an inspiration.

