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From ‘me’ to ‘we’

Ashraf Patel of Pravah & ComMutiny Youth Collective just won the Social Entrepreneur of the Year (SEOY) Award — India 2020.



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Ashraf Patel with youth leaders from Pravah & ComMutiny Youth Collective

By Express News Service

Ashraf Patel of Pravah & ComMutiny Youth Collective just won the Social Entrepreneur of the Year (SEOY) Award — India 2020. Smriti Zubin Irani, Minister of Women & Child Development & Textiles presented the award to her at a virtual ceremony. Patel emerged victorious from among 100 entries received from 23 cities across India.

Instituted by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation, the award is given to entrepreneurs who implement innovative, sustainable and scalable solutions to solve India's social problems. The win enables Patel to participate in the regional and annual meetings of the World Economic Forum and engage with global decision makers from various sectors as well as civil society.



“This recognition for youth leadership has come at a moment when it was most needed. The world right now is beset with inequality, conflict and environmental issues. This whole experience of COVID has demonstrated to us that we are all inter-dependent on each other. To live a harmonious life and also grow, we need to look at each other as a part of the self,” she adds.

Patel did her Bachelors in Physics from Delhi University followed by a postgraduate diploma in Industrial Relations Management from XLRL, Jamshedpur. In 1993, she co-founded Pravah with Meenu Venkateswaran and Arjun Shekhar, and since then has been working for building an inclusive society by developing youth change-makers through psycho-social interventions. “Pravah was set up after the Babri Masjid demolition and communal riots.

We were keen to address the issues of violence, discrimination and hate. Violence in the society is the manifestation of violence in us,” informs Patel. “We don't want to just develop peaceful and loving individuals, but mould them into leaders who can become changemakers. We wanted to change the mindset of people, especially the youth, from ‘me’ to ‘we’,” she adds.

A few years down the line the founders realised that identity-based violence was just one issue confronting the society. There are so many others like climate change, polarisation, gender issues that the youth were confronted with on a day-to-day basis, and all these needed to be tackled.

So, in 2008, ComMutiny — The Youth Collective, was formed in association with some other organisations, to promote youth-centric spaces through joint programmes and public engagement on contemporary issues. The two organisations together nurtured over 6,80,000 young leaders, worked with 1,200 youth-centric organisations and 100 civil society groups across 17 states in India.