

# Moulding changemakers

## Steve Rocha: Empowering Children To Speak, Lead, And Shape Their World

INTERVIEW

Avni Takiar, X K & Saumya, XI I, AIS Noida

With an aim to amplify the voices of children, Steve Rocha, Founder Director and Vision & Identity Leader of PRATYeK, envisions a just and equitable world where children themselves lead the call for change, echoing the powerful motto, "For every right. For everyone." He is also the National Convener and founder of NINEISMINE, a unique advocacy movement of, for, and by children, pushing for increased public investment in child welfare. As jury member of YP 2024-25, Steve shares his journey with GT reporters.

### A noble profession

There's a growing openness in society towards social work. People are finding ways to balance financial stability with meaningful work. There's often this myth that working for justice, human rights, or with NGOs isn't 'lucrative' enough. But I believe, you can earn a living and still have ethics and morality. If we want a world that is equal, fair, and just, we must be willing to step out and work for that change ourselves.

### Justice starts at school

Every child is a natural changemaker.

That's why I believe every school and every teacher must wear the lens of justice and advocacy in the classroom. I always urge educators to deeply understand and teach the basic concepts of true justice and human rights, not as subjects, but as ways of seeing the world. In our programme of Bearing Justice, we help teachers incorporate these crucial ideas into their everyday lessons.

### Our present and future

PRATYeK is not just an organisation, it's a revolutionary vision. It's about giving young people the chance to reimagine the current world. They may not vote, but they are very much like the other citizens, affected by the policies we make. Young people influence the market, shape narratives, and can push for policy changes. They aren't just the future that will come, they're the present. Their honesty, their courage, and their lack of ego inspire me.

### Investing in decision-makers

Our NINEISMINE campaign began around 2006, when conversations about ending poverty and reversing climate change started. We brought together schools, activists, and children from all walks of life. A story that stayed with me is of a visually impaired girl who became the first PM of our Children's Parliament. Today, thanks to our collective voices, all major political parties have adopted the 6% (for education) and 9% (for health) public investment policy. Governments are engaging with children on issues like online safety and environmental protection.

Pic: Reeva Sachdev, AIS Noida, XII E



Steve Rocha with GT reporters

### Courage fuels transformation

Change is always painfully slow. And yet, I have come to believe that even in failure, there is a success. I have spent sleepless nights when I sat in police stations, trying to get children released - children who should never have been there to begin with. But then, I see my students and their strong courage. Despite growing up in a world that is often so very brutal and unforgiving, they speak out. That's what keeps me going - this unshakable belief in the power of young people to change this old narrative.

### Message for Amitians

My advice would be that you must engage with the environment around you in order to better understand its diverse set of challenges. If you remain in the comfort of your school or home, you will only see one version of the world. But upon stepping into a slum or talking to children struggling for their basic rights, you will witness another new reality, one that will certainly change the entire basis of how you think and act.

Steve Rocha, founder-director, PRATYeK

## A lesson on the ABC of OCD

**Synopsis:** This book by David Adam is a profound exploration of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), blending personal narrative, scientific insight, and historical context. Adam, who himself battles OCD, intertwines his experiences with the stories of others, creating a rich tapestry of understanding. He delves into the scientific origins of OCD, explaining the neural pathways and cognitive processes that contribute to the disorder. He also traces its history, examining how OCD has been portrayed in literature and society, offering a comprehensive view of its evolution. Through vivid storytelling, Adam captures the

**Book:** The man who couldn't stop  
**Author:** David Adam  
**Published in:** April 2014  
**Genre:** Nonfiction, Memoir

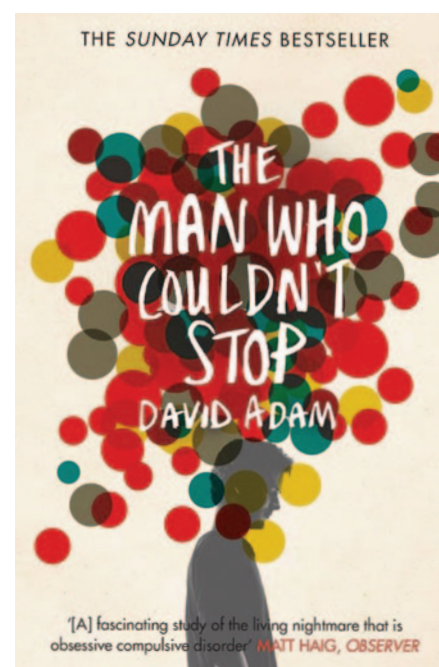
emotional turmoil those with OCD face, illustrating the weight of intrusive thoughts and compulsive behaviours. As he unravels the complexity of the disorder, he also discusses various treatments and therapies, highlighting efforts to alleviate its impact. **Why it is worth reading:** This book is a must-read for anyone seeking deeper insight into the human mind. The au-

thor skillfully weaves together personal experience and meticulous research in a way that's both engaging and enlightening. By breaking down the stereotypes and challenging the myths around OCD, the book serves as a powerful tool for raising awareness and fostering empathy. Whether you're personally affected by OCD, know someone who is, or simply want to expand your understanding, this book offers a unique and valuable perspective.

**Iconic quote:** "Only a fool or a liar will tell you how the brain works."

**Rating:** 4/5

**Review by:** Anupriya Chauhan  
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Book Review