



Dr. Sapptarishi Ghosh

Architect of Consulting-Led Incubation and Institutional Transformation

Shweta Singh | The CEO Magazine



DR. SAPPTARISHI GHOSH
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& Innovation (SCEI)

As India's innovation economy matures, the need for structured thinking, diagnostic precision, and long-term strategic guidance has never been more critical. Founders and institutions alike are seeking leaders who can bring order to complexity and chart pathways toward sustainable growth. Responding to this need for clarity and strategic discipline is Dr. Sapptarishi Ghosh, a leader whose consulting-first approach has powered some of the most impactful entrepreneurial transformations in recent years.

The Making of a Strategist

With over two decades of leadership experience across multinational corporations, five years of steering his own ventures, and six years in academia-linked incubation, Dr. Ghosh has emerged as one of India's influential voices in innovation, entrepreneurship development, and institutional transformation. His journey blends corporate foresight, entrepreneurial resilience, and a deep commitment to nation-building.

His leadership philosophy took shape during his entrepreneurial years, where he built and steered three ventures across the full startup lifecycle—from ideation to scaling and eventual exits. Those years reinforced a key insight: most founders do not struggle because their ideas are weak, but because they lack structured guidance. This belief became the foundation of his consulting-first approach and later inspired him to enter academia-linked incubation as a way to democratise high-quality consulting for early-stage founders.

When he took charge as CEO of Symbiosis Centre for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (SCEI) in October 2024, he brought the precision of a consultant, the drive of a founder, and the mission-led mindset of an educator. From his first months in office, he initiated a transformation blueprint focused on operational excellence, strategic partnerships, digital readiness, and outcome-driven incubation. The impact was immediate. SCEI recorded a 75% rise in its client base and a 100% expansion of its

mentor network, enabling more personalised and sector-specific support for startups. He strengthened processes, reduced client servicing and turnaround time, introduced new progress metrics, and implemented systems and SOPs that significantly improved operational efficiency.

A defining achievement has been repositioning SCEI from a cost centre to a self-sustaining profit centre, built on redesigned services, shared offerings, improved revenue models, and sharper value delivery. Under his leadership, SCEI also mobilised substantial CSR funding that supported infrastructure expansion, new lab assets, and rural entrepreneurship programs. These initiatives unlocked grassroots interventions for women entrepreneurs, rural innovators, and students from low-income regions, reinforcing SCEI's commitment to inclusive development.

His philosophy remains clear and consistent: "Consulting is not about giving solutions; it is about building institutional capability and founder clarity." This is the principle that continues to shape his work at SCEI.

Symbiosis Centre for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (SCEI)

Established on 23rd September 2016, SCEI was created to empower innovation-led entrepreneurship, strengthen India's startup ecosystem, and connect academia with industry. Guided by the values of integrity, innovation, impact, inclusivity, and industry alignment, its vision is to become one of India's most impactful and globally connected incubators, built on transparent and ethical governance, non-discriminatory selection processes, and a commitment to equal-opportunity entrepreneurship.

Over the years, SCEI has supported and trained more than 1,000 startups and entrepreneurs through structured pre-incubation and incubation programs, backed by national programs, CSR partners, and VC networks. With a lean team of under 100 employees and centres in Pune, Noida, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Nasik, and Nagpur, it has built a strong operational footprint across the country.

What Sets SCEI Apart

SCEI stands out for its consulting-led incubation model, which replaces event-driven approaches with structured, diagnostic, and strategy-oriented engagement. Its offerings span incubation and acceleration programs, diagnostics, strategy roadmaps, financial modelling, market-entry planning, fundraising support, investor relations, and access to technology and lab infrastructure. The centre also provides global and industry mentorship, a shared services marketplace, CSR-backed intervention programs, virtual incubation, corporate open innovation,

and internationalisation opportunities. This integrated approach, strengthened by relationships with more than 50 VC firms, angel funds, and family offices, opens access to early-stage capital, global exposure, and specialised expertise. It enables SCEI to serve a broad spectrum of founders, including students, working professionals, women entrepreneurs, faculty innovators, and deep-tech teams. SCEI's competitive edge lies in its combination of strategy consulting, international partnerships, CSR-driven inclusion, virtual incubation capabilities, and streamlined systems, positioning SCEI as one of India's most inclusive, outcomes-focused, and future-ready incubation platforms.

Values

*Integrity, Innovation, Impact, Inclusivity,
and Industry alignment,*

Vision

*"To become one of India's most impactful
and globally connected incubators,
championing ethical governance and equal-
opportunity entrepreneurship".*

Mission

*"To empower diverse entrepreneurs by
providing equitable access to resources,
industry mentorship, and global networks,
fostering innovation-led ventures that
create measurable economic, social, and
environmental impact"*

Navigating Setbacks

Behind SCEI's progress lies a series of challenges that demanded focused and systematic solutions. The team had to address fragmented operations, limited digital integration, the absence of standardised metrics, and gaps in rural outreach. These were resolved through process re-engineering, KPI-based monitoring dashboards, expanded virtual incubation, and strategic CSR partnerships. Strengthened mentor frameworks and data-driven decision-making further streamlined operations and extended SCEI's reach to underserved regions.

Honours & Milestones

SCEI's impact is reflected in the outcomes achieved by its portfolio. Incubatees have raised over ₹17 crore in seed funding, and the combined valuation of supported ventures has crossed ₹140 crore. Its work has earned national recognition, including being named a Leading

Business Incubator at the Entrepreneur India Awards. Flagship initiatives such as the India–UK Healthcare Acceleration Program and the collaboration with Deakin University have opened global pathways and strengthened women-focused entrepreneurship, while partnerships with Big Four firms, SME clusters, and Women Self-Help Groups continue to drive grassroots innovation.

For Dr. Ghosh, success is defined by measurable outcomes: startups that scale, jobs created, and founders who gain long-term clarity and capability. His contributions have earned over twenty national and international recognitions, including 40 Under 40, Best Business Mentor, Best Technopreneur, the Education Excellence Award and the Education Leadership Award. He has spoken at leading global forums, delivered two TEDx talks, and inspired over 10,000 student-preneurs across India. Among his professional milestones at SCEI, he values building a self-sustaining centre, expanding global pathways, strengthening the investor ecosystem, and enabling job creation through venture growth.

What Lies Ahead for SCEI

SCEI has strengthened its operations through virtual incubation frameworks and platforms, analytics-based tracking, and AI-enabled administrative automation. These upgrades have improved transparency, accelerated decision-making, and reduced incubation-to-scale turnaround time. To stay future-ready, the centre is also developing AI-driven startup evaluation tools, predictive analytics for founder readiness, automated reporting systems, and frameworks for AI-led open innovation with industry partners.

Several high-impact initiatives currently define SCEI’s strategic focus. These include a large CSR-funded EV Lab, international startup exchange programs, the scale-up of virtual incubation, a shared services platform offering legal, financial, and branding support, and corporate open innovation partnerships. Each project is driven by structured planning, rigorous execution, and clear performance metrics.

Looking ahead, Dr. Ghosh aims to position SCEI among India’s top three university-based incubators. The plan includes a 100,000 sq. ft. innovation hub, partnerships across 20+ countries, a portfolio of over 5,000 supported startups, stronger revenue-generating models, and specialised verticals in EV, biotech, sustainability, and social innovation. His long-term goal is to build an innovation-driven regional economy that creates jobs and nurtures strong, sustainable ventures.

Together, these efforts span grassroots entrepreneurship, institutional partnerships, sector-focused programs, and global collaborations, reinforcing SCEI’s scale, inclusivity, and long-term national impact.

Closing Note

Dr. Sappatarishi Ghosh remains a prominent force in India’s innovation and entrepreneurship landscape, shaping institutions and ecosystems with a mission-driven approach. As the CEO of SCEI, a Section 8 not-for-profit incubator now in its tenth year of operation, he has positioned the organisation as a hyper-customised, domain-agnostic incubation platform offering bespoke venture consulting and long-horizon founder support, far beyond the traditional cohort-led accelerator model.

Dr. Ghosh’s leadership has helped secure major institutional milestones, including a ₹25 crore endowment in 2025, strengthening SCEI’s role as a national leader in venture development. He also initiated the Dasa-Bhuja Initiative to advance SCEI’s Vision 2030, aligning with national ambitions such as Viksit Bharat, Make in India, and Startup India.

Leadership Mantra

Dr. Ghosh believes that the future belongs to those who combine structured thinking with empathy. Advising aspiring entrepreneurs, he shares, “Learn consulting frameworks, but never lose the human element. Build strong networks; capital follows relationships. Be obsessed with customer insight. Innovate responsibly, act ethically, and focus on execution. Ideas are cheap; discipline is priceless.”