

THE  
**WIMWIAN**

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Tri-annual



**YOUNG  
ALUMNI  
ACHIEVER'S  
AWARD  
2020**



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**WIMWIAN**

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Dear Alumni,

Greetings!

We do live in strange times!

It is placement time at IIMA but no red carpets are being rolled out for the recruiters! The hustle and bustle of placement activities continue, albeit in its virtual avatar. Candidates check-out from the virtual candidate pool and proceed to check-in and enter the virtual interview rooms. Central trackers and wing trackers still monitor every single step of the way, the control room is still a buzz of activity. However, the P.P. Gupta Auditorium in the New Campus wears a deserted look with a handful of placecomers talking over intercoms and peering into the desktop monitors. Could we have even dreamt of such a surreal placement landscape? Yet, everything is under control and the Placement Chairperson is as cheery as always. Welcome to the new normal.

Classrooms are abuzz too with voices but very few footfalls. Hybrid classes are in progress with a camera tracking the movement of the instructor inside the class. A handful of students are inside the classroom, seated while maintaining social distance, while the rest are joining in through Zoom. The instructor writes on a whiteboard and students in the classroom speak into a microphone or a laptop to enable online participants to listen to the arguments. The class is as insightful and action packed as always. The Academic Associate scans through the Zoom videos to check for the late entrants, the clever ones who have found out ingenious ways of beating the panopticon or the tired ones meditating during the class. Alas, the ability to be a backbencher has vanished on Zoom, but that does not deter students from creative ways of sleeping with their eyes wide open. Leaving a class was never easier, just blame it on poor internet connectivity. Welcome to the new normal.

The admissions too are online with interview panelists seated in separate rooms in IMDC and the candidate joining in from a studio in another city. The questions are probing as always, distance does not lessen the intensity of the interview. Interviews are organized across multiple cities on the same day, without the panelists stepping out from the campus. Welcome to the new normal.

And suddenly it dawns on you that so much redesign of existing processes is possible if we are forced to handle a changed reality. Could the alumni activities too change with the advent of new technology? We could draw inspiration from the PGP 1990 batch, who did not allow the pandemic to rob them of their scheduled reunion. Instead, they used an interactive online event hosting platform (not Zoom!) to not only connect virtually with batchmates but also to felicitate the retired faculty members living in different cities.

Could we welcome the new normal in alumni activities too?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,  
Prof. Saral Mukherjee  
Dean, Alumni and External Relations

# YOUNG ALUMNI ACHIEVER'S AWARD 2020



The sixth edition of the Young Alumni Achiever's Award was held virtually on 11th of December, 2020, the WIMWIAN's Day. The ceremony was followed by a launch of the first ever edition of WIMWIAN's Cup, an online inter-batch cultural event being hosted by the SMAs on campus for the institute's alumni.

In the year 2020, the Institute recognized the professional accomplishments of the following alumni under three categories.			
Mr. Suraj Moraje	PGP-1999	Corporate Leadership	Group CEO, Qess Corporation
Mr. GV Ravishankar	PGP-2004	Corporate Leadership	Managing Director, Sequoia Capital
Ms. Sonali Dhawan	PGP-1998	Corporate Leadership	Vice President, Feminine Hygiene, Asia Middle East and Africa
Mr. Abhiraj Singh Bhal	PGP-2011	Entrepreneurship	Co-founder & CEO, Urban Company
Mr. Siddharth Shah	PGP-2012	Entrepreneurship	Co-Founder & CEO, Ascent Health & PharmEasy
Mr. Sumeet Mehta	PGP-1999	Entrepreneurship	Co-Founder & CEO, LEAD School
Mr. Mohit Garg	PGP-2012	Public Service	District Police Chief of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) Hub

# CORPORATE LEADERSHIP



## Suraj Moraje

(PGP1999)

**Group CEO, Quess Corporation**

**Nov 19 to current**

### When was the last time you were on campus?

It must be 15 years ago, I think. I was really hoping to come for the award ceremony, but it was not to be.

**Being from the 1999 batch, you would have the 25th reunion in a couple of years. We would love to have you back at that time.**

I hope for the same!

**What does the YAAA and recognition mean to you?**

It's tremendous. The news of the award came in April last year, when the lockdown had been freshly imposed, a time when I the luxury to be a bit reflective. Recognitions such as this flow from a series of opportunities that life brings along. I am grateful to life. And I'm grateful to the Institute for recognising me, even though there are many unsung heroes who deserve the accolade more than me.

**From a McKinsey veteran to Group CEO, Quess Corporation. How has the transition been?**

It's an interesting question because I spent 20 years at McKinsey. I love the Firm and if you cut me even now, I bleed blue! Being a part of the Firm and also

Quess Corp is India's leading business services provider and the country's largest employer in the private sector with over 333,000 employees.

**Senior Partner, McKinsey & Company | 1999 to 2019**

Suraj joined McKinsey in Mumbai, directly out of IIMA. He moved to Brussels in 2004, where he eventually became the first Asian to be elected a McKinsey Partner on continental Europe.

In 2008, Suraj moved to South Africa to establish McKinsey's regional TMT practice, eventually serving Africa's leading companies and governments across 20+ countries. Suraj's work in Africa included helping a multi-national operator capture scale from its global operations, helping a large media player develop a regional sales footprint, and developing a national broadband strategy for a large country.

Suraj led the turnaround of McKinsey's practice in Manila from 2014 to 2018, where his work included helping top conglomerates develop and implement digital strategies, counselling family-owned businesses, helping government think through how to drive ICT in the economy, and supporting the Philippine government in post-Typhoon Yolanda recovery.

having the opportunity to be a partner to the Firm for a decade was a tremendous experience. But I hit a point where I felt the question for me was 'Do I spend the next 20 years doing the same thing or do I try something else with a new learning curve?'. This is how I began my quest for something new where I could have more direct impact on the world. I feel strongly about 3 areas in particular – education, healthcare, and blue collared labour. So, when the Quess opportunity came along, I felt it to be 'too good to be true' and jumped head in.

How has it been so far, especially in terms of the specific measures you have taken or will undertake to place Quess qualitatively in a much better position than before?

I think the better way to ask this is ‘What will we do?’, because it takes a village to grow a child, and a team to grow a company. We have a great team.

I formally took over as CEO one week into the lockdown and, on reflection, Covid-19 has further sharpened our priorities while accelerating our execution. The pandemic scenario created a burning platform for us through the need for dramatic cost reductions through automation, digitization and workforce tooling. It gave us a real impetus to make sure we were being extremely agile, cutting through layers and digitizing as much as possible, leading to 20% indirect cost saving in a span of two months. On the customer end, and being India’s largest employer, we had to upgrade our practices very quickly and this helped us in introducing new services to the market.

**Qess has a very active acquisition strategy. What makes inorganic such an attractive preferred growth strategy for Qess and is this an integral component of your strategy for the foreseeable future?**

Acquisitions are an important part of the corporate toolkit. Qess has had an acquisitive strategy in the past, and this has been central to build the strongest platform in the country that offers such a breadth of services. With the platform now largely built out, our focus is on ensuring that we fully digest the existing acquisitions and grow the cash flow generation every year. Acquisitions could happen from time to time, though. For example, we recently invested into Taskmo, a digital task execution platform.

**How do you manage the integration of such diverse portfolio businesses?**

Some of it boils down to corporate philosophy. Our philosophy is that if you have acquired a company, you want to keep the entrepreneurship and the specialness of that company, and not integrate too much.

**With the pressure of improving operating cash flow and delivery, we are sure you have to contend with culture as well.**

Yes, and no. You buy a company because it provides a service or a product that you don’t currently offer. Sometimes, providing that service requires it to have a different culture. For example,

“ **So, our philosophy is that if you have acquired a company, you want to keep the entrepreneurship and the specialness of that company, and not integrate too much.** ”

if you consider monsterindia.com, which is an Internet products company with a different cadence from a typical services company. You want to make sure that you build a specific culture, which is product-centric. So, it is imperative to have different cultures across the company.

I think, what needs to be defined relentlessly is the irreducible core that defines Qess as a company. For example, you want to make sure that the finance, legal, compliance backbone is single across the company, so that, from a governance perspective, there is uniformity. Further, you need to define what are the few things that really matter, like you want to make sure every business has thought through what excellent customer service means, as at Qess, we want to be known for excellent customer service. In that sense, one needs to ensure that every business has a tight operating cadence, digitization, high metabolic rate and high growth rate. In my experience, what gets measured, gets done. Also, consistency of communication is absolutely central to building the right culture in any company.

**Which areas do you see the maximum potential for growth in the foreseeable future?**

We outsource a wide range of processes (mostly requiring grey collar labour) from our clients, and deliver them with superior productivity and flexibility. I am a big believer in the future of the Indian productivity game in this space, considering two factors. I think one is that the level of formalization in India is comparatively low versus developed peers. Also, even within formalized space, if you look at the penetration of outsourcing, it is less than half the way in comparison to the developed economies. So, the outsourcing journey has a long way to go, if we look at the tailwinds of formalization plus outsourcing.

Historically in India, we have viewed the grey collared segment as cheap labour. Those times are

changing. For example, if you look at a security guard in Bangalore, his minimum wage is about the same as an engineer who is just starting his career. It is good that the wages have improved, but this also brings in the demand of being more productive that would require a higher grade of mechanization and supervision. This is what I am excited to see, as the market size grows up to 10 times in the coming years.

**What are the specifications that Ques is taking to take advantage of all of the changes that you see?**

One of the things we're trying to do is to digitize our hire-to-retain process, which covers everything from sourcing talent to interviewing to onboarding to payroll and then compliance management – also making it more scalable. We have already got some of the best-in-class tools. Our regtech is the best in the country through a subsidiary called Simpliance. We have also got one of the best recruitment platforms for blue-collar jobs which has been used by 300 odd external customers already.

Secondly, we are investing in better workforce management. For example, we own India's most widely used workforce management application in the grey-collar space. Currently, more than 200,000 of our employees use this application each month for functions like attendance, managing rostering, access benefits, and more. We are also starting to digitize their workflows, to manage their work remotely, help them to be more productive and also train them for the future.

Over and above, as a B2B player, making sure that our sales engines are fully firing, looking at our go-to-market, always strengthening that and investing there, including building a cross-sell capability across our service lines is a priority.

**How would you describe your journey so far?**

There have been many times in my career when I thought that all that was left for me was to resign and retire! And yet, here I am today, so far from where I began! In my experience, life is not linear and I have been blessed to have my hard work pay off.

Having said that, there have been many moments in life when I have reflected on what I was doing, why

**“ In that sense, one needs to ensure that every business has a tight operating cadence, digitization, high metabolic rate for reviews and high growth rate. ”**

was I doing it, and a lot of emotions followed. This self-reflection pops up every couple of years, and I feel the secret of success is to figure out how to leverage those moments for the better, whether by doubling down to see the current episode out or pivoting to something different. I think having this compass and self-awareness is important, and tuning that awareness over time is really the key.

**When not working, what are the little things that you enjoy doing the most? How do you relate yourself to music and please tell us about your huge vinyl records collection?**

I have stopped buying new vinyl records because I have realised that I should first finish listening to those that I have!

I enjoy photography, particularly wildlife and landscape. Unfortunately, in the last year, I haven't done enough. But typically I try to travel each year for a week, to a place that has zero mobile connectivity and just take photographs. This experience really recharges me.

Another thing that I love doing, being a Mangalorean and vegetarian, is to cook traditional Mangalorean recipes. I also cook pretty decent Italian. So, on Sundays, we sometimes cook pasta from scratch with my sons.

**What pointers would you like to give to the new batches at IIMA, specifically related to consulting?**

Consulting is a wonderful career, as it gives you an insight into so many angles of business and problems that sharpen and structure the mind. I am grateful to have spent so many years in consulting and highly recommend the experience.

Beyond that, I would say that when I was on campus, I was often driven by anxiety around my future and



success in life. Success was narrowly defined. It almost felt that your life will end with your placement. But, in reality, life is only starting with placement.

One should be driven not from a place of anxiety, but from the place of curiosity. What defines your

happiness, and what would make you feel like you are having impact in the world? If you are able to figure this out, have the courage to follow it, and you will be successful – regardless of whether you win accolades or have pots of money.

## CORPORATE LEADERSHIP



### GV Ravishankar

(PGP 2004)

**Managing Director, Sequoia Capital**

**What does the YAAA and recognition mean to you?**

I would like to thank the Institute first, as we all have many fond memories of the time at IIMA and it has given us a lot. It is a big gift to be recognized for what I have achieved in the corporate world and the impact people like me are making on the economy or the country. It also means that the Institute also feels that I am on the right track and it is always good to get a pat on the back and some words of encouragement from people that are wiser than you are. This recognition might also inspire others to take the path that we have taken.

**When was the last time you were on campus?**

I was there in Dec 2019 for the 15<sup>th</sup> year reunion of the batch. But, I have been coming to the campus, I wouldn't say often, but as much as I can, especially for the Endowment Fund that has been recently established.

Lead the Growth business at Sequoia Capital India  
Lead a team of 100+ people as a part of the Senior leadership at Sequoia Capital India  
Investment experience across sectors (Financial Services, Education, Retail) and across stages (Seed to IPOs)

#### Key Recognitions

- Executive Committee, Venture Capital, Indian Venture Capital Association, 2019
- Serves on the boards of Byjus (Think & Learn), Capital Float, Eruditus Learning, Faces Cosmetics, Five Star finance, Finova Capital, HomeLane, India Shelter Finance Corporation, Indigo Paints, K12 Technoservices, Prataap Snacks (NSE: DIAMONDYD), Rebel Foods, Rupeek, Suburban Diagnostics and Turtlemint. Also served as board member/observer of companies like Via (sold to NASDAQ: EBIX), Manappuram (NSE: MANAPPURAM) and Equitas (NSE: EQUITAS)
- Gold Medalist, IIM Ahmedabad

I have also been able to see some of the changes that are happening in the Institute.

So, I am always looking for opportunities to come back and unfortunately as a firm, we are too small to recruit from campuses, but I have been on campus to speak to the students as part of a few courses. Primarily, my agenda of coming back at every possibility is to absorb and relive some of the memories from our stay there.

**You moved to the nascent venture capital industry during the mid-2000s. How has that journey been?**

According to me, a lot of life is about serendipity and you know what matters is how you capitalize on

the serendipity. So, I was prompted to join McKinsey with the thought that it is closest to what I would enjoy doing and have a wide-ranging learning opportunity. But, two years in, I realised that I can drift to something bigger in terms of my expectations.

Also, back in the campus, me and a friend of mine who were regulars at breakfast would make a fair point to discuss new ideas, ranging from low-cost hotels to business opportunities that can be. So, when I met folks at Westbridge, which was later called Sequoia, it seemed unbelievable that someone could pay me for what I was enjoying doing in my breakfast meetings and weekends with my friends. So, it was in December 2005 when I joined the firm and it has been 15 years now. It is sheer gratitude for having this opportunity of learning and growing with the firm.

**What are your thoughts and recommendations on the impact of technology in the consumer market, especially with other emerging start-ups in the sector?**

Here, the first thing to acknowledge is that India is still a developing country with a low per-capita GDP. Also, with vast geographical diversity, our country behaves very differently in every region. So, when I started in 2006, India had like 20 to 30 million broadband users at 256 Kbps. This left no scope of building anything revolutionary considering the network and infrastructure constraints. The real change happened after Jio launched in India, as a large proportion of India is now connected with real data, followed by a significant acceleration in technology adoption.

Incidentally, the recent pandemic has also revolutionised the way we consume technology as most of the people have got used to not just being online, but transacting online for a wide array of routine tasks like groceries to education. .

So, if you ask me about the time when we started our investing career in 2006 in comparison to now and how it would be 15 years from now - I wouldn't have guessed the transition that has happened till now, but from a recent perspective, I think I will underestimate the possibility of what can happen.

If about the emerging start-ups, we had 11 or 13 unicorns during the shutdown itself. So, in my view,

**“ So, to get lucky, you really need to show up and be open minded to new experiences. You also need to knock on doors as there is no down set to asking. ”**

the emergence is going to accelerate, because of a few aspects such as, India being one of the fastest-growing countries, increased technology penetration, and improved capital availability. Considerately, India can build these good companies domestically, but more importantly, we can build companies for the world as well.

In terms of recommendations, we have to continue to invest in infrastructure by lubricating the economy in as many ways as possible and eliminate friction in as many ways as possible, if you want to build businesses. You also need to enhance capital availability in terms of debt because debt markets in India are not as deep as in the western markets. Similarly, on the public front, a lot can be done to ease companies accessing the markets in terms of regulations. Again, a lot can be done, even for private market capital in terms of taxation and clarity on taxation that can allow more capital to come. Finally, our regulatory and judicial systems need to get faster and clearer.

**According to you, how has the pandemic affected your industry?**

I would say that pandemic is clearly a human tragedy that has affected a lot of people. We have companies in our portfolio with extended families who have also been affected, but from where I see it, every crisis is also an opportunity in many ways. It is a chance for many of us to relook at the very core and figure out a way forward.

But, beyond this, there have indeed been gainers and losers. So, anything that was technology-driven gained because those markets have remained broadly open, but anything that has been significantly offline struggled a little bit. There was this whole dichotomy of the haves and the have nots.

I also feel that the companies will take a few more months to figure out how to take advantage of the new growth opportunities and reorient themselves to the

benign market environment that we see today.

**You being a self-confessed introvert, how did you overcome the disconnect in terms of what you are and what you're required to do?**

I was obviously apprehensive initially, but the beauty of our job and this role is that you meet a lot of wonderful people who are aspiring to change the world. In my view, it is highly motivating to go meet a founder and have a conversation about how he or she views the world differently. This experience is never energy sapping and generally giving me the opportunities to learn new things.

Also, a lot of people talk about how to widen your network and so on and so forth to be successful. I think of it a little differently. I try to be genuinely helpful to people as much as I can, and I do feel 'what goes around comes around'.

**"Were we just lucky or did working harder pay off?" - How does one grow professionally or even personally in the serendipity sphere according to you?**

The way I think about serendipity is, you know, events happen and they can be good or bad. You can get a break when you least expect, can bump into someone, can be sitting next to somebody in a flight and something clicks during a random conversation. So, the question is not about whether these things happen or not, as you can not control these events, but what you can control is your reaction to these events. It is all about how you intercept that opportunity or the lucky break, when you are in a situation with a positive frame of mind. I mean, the simplest example can be how I got into Sequoia, following a conversation with a friend from McKinsey who just happened to go to Walberg. After the conversation, he got a call from his Head to say that they were looking for someone junior at Westbridge, which is now Sequoia. So, if that conversation had not happened and I had no curiosity about what that friend was doing, it wouldn't have led him to recommend me for the role.

So, to get lucky, you really need to show up and be open minded to new experiences. You also need to knock on doors as there is no down set to asking.

**Looking at all that you've achieved so far, what**

**“ In my view, it is highly motivating to go meet a founder and have a conversation about how he or she views the world differently. ”**

**according to you is your biggest achievement?**

This is a profound question in many ways. It was late 2016 when I went for a Vipassana meditation retreat for 10 days. So, this was the time when you think a lot and self-reflect. So, in terms of life, I could thank God in many ways. But, in terms of true achievements, it turned out, for me, it was a very simple incident that happened during my undergrad days and placement season. I was the campus placement representative and the 11th day was my break day, where I step off and somebody else steps in to play the role. While I was placed with Wipro on Day 1, we still had a few people who were not placed. Although, it was my off, I went to college. This also happened to be the day when Polaris was coming to the campus and it's a company that is also focussed on databases. We had this guy in the class who was highly interested in databases. I believed that he would make it to that particular company, but wasn't short-listed in the second round. So, I thought of giving it a shot by having a conversation with the recruiter and it turned out they ultimately ended up hiring him. This is not a big deal, but is the highlight of my life and the biggest achievement.

So, if you can touch the lives of people and make a meaningful contribution to them, I think that is a real achievement. Also, a part of my writing process is really to see if I can add value to people.

**When not working, what are the little things that you enjoy doing the most?**

I look forward to spending time with my family. Apart from that, once a week, I play squash which happens to be the sport that I picked up quite late in my life. I like to read a lot, which was acquired quite late again. So, in the last year itself, I have read about 50 books. I also enjoy writing and want to do more of that. Additionally, my recent interest has been in Biology.

<Transcribed from video interview>

## CORPORATE LEADERSHIP



## Sonali Dhawan

(PGP 1998)

**Vice President, Feminine Hygiene -  
Asia, Middle East and Africa**

**What are your fondest memories from the campus?**

I remember a lot of things very fondly especially because I was an avid enthusiastic participant in all the events on the campus, especially the Combos, Chaos, Talent Night -where for the first time in my life, I did a fashion show. Also, the most important times were the times that I spent with my husband, Sanjeev, as we both were in the same section and groups together. Further, I think the friendships from IIMA last a lot stronger than the rivalries. Also, you tend to remember the happy times a lot more than the poor grades that you might have got in some of the quizzes. I have considerably enjoyed my stay in the city, especially during the kite festival and loved the Diwali decoration on the campus. For me, the two years at the Institute were fun.

**What does the YAAA and recognition mean to you?**

I think it is very special, when your Alma mater, such as IIM Ahmedabad, gives you such recognition. This is a place where many esteemed people have walked through the doors and in hallways, so this award feels special with a feeling that you are supported by your peers and teachers. It is going to stay with me for a

### Key Recognitions

- Associated with the development of multiple award-winning campaigns including Cannes Award winners - Ariel #SharetheLoad, Whisper #TouchthePickle, Vicks #TouchofCare
- Served On the Executive Committee of the Indian Society of Advertisers, and the Technical Council of BARC for digital measurement
- Awarded 'Top Women Achievers of 2017' by AsiaOne magazine
- Awarded 'CMO of the Year' by exchange4media in the category of Home Products in 2015
- Winner of 2 Pitch CMO awards in 2017 (Gender Equity and Social Responsibility)
- Ranked #5 on the list of IMPACT 'Most Influential Women in Marketing and Media' 2019

lifetime.

**Tell us about creating your success path to P&G and many important leadership roles.**

My path was actually quite simple. I joined P&G as my first job in life and the first one out of campus. I have been associated with P&G for 23 years now. So, I started in India with Haircare, and after a couple of years, I was fortunate enough to shift base to Singapore for 8-9 years and then again I had the opportunity to come back to India in 2009 to lead Beauty Care and Media operations. I was in India for the next two years, and during this course, my younger son was born. Following this, I took up an unusual role as Managing Director for Pet Care, Asia in Singapore. After working in Singapore for a couple of years, I came back to India for my family as the CMO and the leader of commercial and brand operations. Subsequently, I took another role within India, as the Head of the fabric care business. Finally, I found myself in Dubai heading the feminine hygiene business for the AMA Region. So, this is how my journey has been.

**How would you define the changing landscape of 'Marketing and Media' for businesses with convergence with technology?**

It is so evolving that I could talk for hours on how things have changed from the time we used to make a 30-second copy, put it on air and then relax for six months. This is definitely not that era, but I think, the basics are similar- A consumer-focussed approach, having great products, bringing them to life with impactful insights and communication. The change is definitely in terms of reaching the customers or mining the insights, which is all about customizing the relevant product and insights, but doing it at scale.

This is the time when the businesses are experiencing a real shift from old-fashioned work to using technology on a one-on-one level. Now, we can create hundreds and thousands of commercials or creatives using AI, customised to be delivered to the right people, right through your desktop or smartphones, with a choice on when they want to see it. So, this brings into focus the essential nature of marketing, which is about consumer delight and consumer relevance which is the same past 20 years, but what has changed is the way it is delivered now, both in terms of creation of product and the message of final delivery.

**What do you feel are the two to three biggest transformative changes that are going to come in this field?**

This is a difficult question because it is difficult to predict the changing dynamics. If this question was asked 3-4 years back, the obvious answer would have been 'The future is digital or AI or blockchain.' But there are a few trends that are going to stay for a while, like, one-to-one marketing over mass marketing, and permission marketing where a lot of focus would be on how the customers want their data to be used. I feel, the future will also hold a lot of value to one-to-one mass customization, relatively great progress in terms of programmatic ways to reach consumers and having a customized product design. The marketing trends can also evolve to 'experience is more than the product'.

**What do you think are the major changes that are coming following the pandemic?**

I think, a few of the emerging trends after the pandemic are antithetical because you might think it should not be so, but we're seeing them. Firstly, there is an increased focus on hygiene and personal

wellness, with the 'natural and sustainable' tag. I can see that sustainability is going to become one of the big frontiers. At the same time, we are experiencing a lot of personal indulgence with a focus on mental wellness, particularly. So, there has been a diversion on wellness products and services that can help people in coping with the new normal. Also, I believe the way we are perceiving technology following the pandemic would also change the consumption patterns, along with priorities in life.

**How is the role of women in business and marketing changing? What transition have you seen, especially following the pandemic, your journey so far and in general?**

It is a very loaded question that has many parts.

Firstly, what is the impact on women in this time of the pandemic? I feel, like with any crisis in the world, whether it be wars or famines, it is majorly the women who get impacted the most, in terms of taking up the harder chunk of work at home, maintaining the families, losing their jobs more often to meet the increased responsibilities at home, salary cuts, added pressure to perform equally well at work and a lot more. So, if you look at the role of the pandemic, it has hurt women a lot more than the male counterparts.

Secondly, your question about how it has impacted my journey! Well, if I have to share about my career as a woman since my first corporate stint, I would say that it ought to have been difficult. With women, the biological clock and career clock compete with each other. I got out of campus in 1998 and got married in 1999 as Assistant Brand Manager. I got my first child as a Brand Manager and the second child as Associate Director. In between all this, we had four moves from Singapore to Mumbai and vice versa. Thankfully, this was easier for me as my husband has been extremely supportive, has been a rock to all my decisions and has been flexible to accommodate his business operations centric to my relocations. For my current move to Dubai, he started an office of his company there beforehand, so I could get more flexibility to move. The second person who has extended immense support to me has been my mother-in-law. She lives with us and even sent me to work right after my maternity, ensuring that she will take care of the baby. So, she is a real reason behind me achieving what I have achieved so far. The third pillar has been P&G as a company with

women-centric policies and so much support to the women, in general. I still remember that when I came back from my first maternity leave, I discussed with my Manager about breastfeeding for a year, and I was not made to travel in a regional job. There have been many pillars and great stories behind my success as a woman with great work-life balance.

Thirdly, how it is for women, in general? Actually, things are changing and for the better. Especially in the company I am associated with, there is a lot more awareness for equality, inclusion and diversity. Otherwise also, I think in the current times, it's not just about women being present, but it is about them having a voice and being included in every decision at the top levels of companies and corporations. P&G has this as a major agenda. We recently concluded the P&G #WeSeeEqual Summit, where many declarations have been made on 50:50 representations at all levels, paternity leave across the whole region for 8 weeks and much more. I sense that across the industry, it has been a well-founded belief that companies that are more equal and diverse tend to have better results. This is making things relatively easier for the women in the corporate world.

In my view, what is not changing so fast is the social fabric. I think, even today, we are raising our daughters to be really strong independent women, but when we are raising our sons, we are not necessarily raising them to be as ready for these strong independent women. So, we still need to progress to a space where there are more men who are ready to share the load, the caregiving efforts, and willing to be equal players.

**2020 interestingly saw a most welcome milestone of women now present on the board of every S&P 500 company and even constituted 47% of the incoming class of new directors. How do you see this as a trend?**

It will require a push by the government as this trend is not autonomous by itself, but has happened because of the legislation passed. I see the trend continuing, as there is a greater and greater push for equal representation across levels. I think, if companies follow similar declarations and agendas, then there is no reason why we should not see this propagating itself. In my view, as more and more women get into the higher echelons, there's more and more for the

“ **It is so evolving that I could talk for hours on how things have changed from the time we used to make a 30-second copy, put it on air and then relax for six months.** ”

companies to pick from when they are choosing the composition of their boards, etc. So, I think it's a very positive trend, and I see it continuing.

**What would be your advice to women to get Board ready?**

I have found myself on the board for Procter and Gamble - Health and Hygiene, as well as Gillette. My first advice to women is that you have to convince yourself that you deserve to be there, add value and have the capability. Secondly, there are many online resources of formal training and certifications through government portals that can help you to be Board ready. The last is to never be shy and show confidence when applying for the Board positions.

**On a lighter note, what are your mantras for work-life balance?**

Apart from the aspects of my life that I mentioned earlier, I would also give credit to my children who are fairly proud of what I have achieved and continuously support me to achieve more. For me, the support system has always been stronger.

If I have to give some advice, the first would be to not be driven by the pursuit of trying to do everything yourself and be perfect at everything as it doesn't happen that way. Additionally, you have to take help from wherever it comes. In fact, there was a time in my career when I was supposed to give my vocational preferences, and I used to make it specific by writing that my mother-in-law should be able to get a visa, my husband should find English-speaking financial industry and there should be house help available. Lastly, you should stop seeking perfection and accept that mistakes are a part of life. There will be times when you will feel extremely guilty for not being there for your child or missing the most important occasions, but you will have to learn to live with some of it.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP



## Abhiraj Singh Bhal

PGP-2011

Co-Founder & CEO, UrbanCompany

**What are your fondest memories from the campus?**

That's a great question. So, I came to IIMA, straight from IIT-Kanpur. That being a typical engineering college, there seems to be a relative relaxation that happens in the final year for most of the students. Considering this, my first memory of IIMA was a stark contrast to the academic culture. During the first trimester at the Institute, I was still figuring out about what actually happened, as with a hectic schedule and constant efforts, I still had the feeling of barely catching up and keeping pace. I assume that I haven't ever worked this hard, especially in the first year. So, the first year was quite overwhelming, with the events from the student clubs, the Placement Committee discussions, creating the CVs from the third day of being in the campus, and a lot more. So, for me, the only tangible option was to fare well in academics and I was able to achieve that. Then for the Summer Placements, I went to BCG, but also opted for the Placement Committee even before this and happened to work closely with Prof. Saral Mukherjee who is still a mentor for me.

The second year was more interesting where I spent most of my time in the Placement Committee, where we even thought of revamping the placement process to 'cohort peace process'. During this association, we did many conferences to promote the IIMA brand, both in India and globally. It was the Singapore Conference

**Impact:** UrbanCompany is India's and the UAE's largest tech-enabled home service marketplace. Since its inception in November 2014, Urban Company has delivered 14 million service orders across 22 cities. Urban Company has recently expanded to Australia and Singapore.

**Key Recognitions:**

Entrepreneur of the year Award 2020, NASSCOM Technology & Leadership Forum

Fortune 40 under 40 for India for three consecutive years in 2017, 2018 and 2019

Entrepreneur Magazine 35 under 35 for India in 2017

GQ 50 most influential young Indians in 2017

Economic Times '16 startup founders of 2016' award

Asia Retail Congress Top 50 most influential E-commerce Professionals for 2018

Guest Faculty for 2nd year MBA course 'Managing Digital Businesses'

which was the most successful, as it was attended by a strong network of alumni in Asia and the son of Prof. Samir Barua who is also an IIM grad and founder of Delhivery. Here, we were able to unlock a lot of new first-time companies leading to an impressively successful placement season in 2011, which followed the perils of global recession since 2009.

**What does the YAAA and recognition mean to you, especially when you are one of the youngest awardees?**

It is a humbling experience and especially when it is coming from my alma mater, it stands as one of the most important awards that I have received so far. IIMA has been a shaping experience for me as a clueless engineering grad who couldn't know how hard he could work. Therefore, to be recognized by the institution for some of the work that I have done through Urban Company in the last 10 years means a lot. I don't think it's an award just for me, but it's an award for the whole company and all the people who work in the company towards our vision to empower millions of service professionals worldwide to deliver services at home like never experienced before. The

first goalpost in this vision is to get 1 million service professionals who could serve millions of consumers in India or elsewhere in India with the highest quality of reliable home services. In the current scenario, we are still far away from that vision and these are early years for us. So, if this award had come 5 or 10 years later, when we would be a much larger and impactful company, it would have seemed well-deserved. Right now, it is both humbling and feels undeserved to me, but I accept it with full humility and gratitude - driven to work harder to grow immensely in terms of impact and corporate social responsibility.

**You co-founded Urban Company (formerly UrbanClap) in 2014. So, what were you up to from 2011-2014, besides your earlier venture Cinema Box?**

I joined the Boston Consulting Group straight from the campus. I worked for about two years in their office in Bombay, for about seven to eight months in Singapore, then towards the last three or four months in Delhi and in between, spent some time for their project in Germany. So, I spent good 3 years with BCG across different offices, working on a variety of different projects and industries, viz., construction, clean energy, commercial & passenger vehicles, financial services, telecom, power and towards the end, banking. So, the basic outlook was to work on the most challenging and interesting problems that the leading companies in the world face. During my tenure with BCG, apart from learning to work on the most strategic topics with senior leadership, I imbibed the BCG value of charting your course as an individual, which was indeed entrepreneurship for me.

**What was that tipping point for you?**

I think it happened over a period of time and the first time I considered entrepreneurship seriously was in my second year at IIMA. At the time, I was talking to my co-founder, Varun Khaitan, who was working with Qualcomm in San Diego, California. He was my batchmate at IIT-Kanpur. We discussed a bunch of ideas, and one of them we really liked was in the Edtech sector. We were not able to get started back then, but, throughout the 3 years at BCG, Varun and I kept exchanging notes on what we could create together. These conversations were sporadic and added up over time. Eventually, thinking more actively, we returned to India in October of

2013, both working with BCG. Towards the end of our stint at BCG, we started Cinema Box in the travel entertainment space. The idea didn't take off, but we had many learnings on how to think about businesses in terms of scalability, profitability and competitive advantage. Also, it gave us the idea that our first company is not the global institution that we wanted to create to outlive all of us. We took the practical decision to put a lock there, being in the guardrails of pragmatism and objectivity, channelising our emotions in the right direction.

Following this, we started thinking fresh and over a few months of market studies, soul searching, thinking and ideating, we arrived at the idea of Urban Company which was called UrbanClap back then.

**Probably asked a lot many times before, but from 'learning to be a good entrepreneur' to 'creating thousands of micro-entrepreneurs through a single platform' - how has the journey been?**

It hasn't been a straight linewalk upwards and has been definitely challenging. We had to undertake many micro pivots and mutations to our business or operating model, along with trying different categories/services/models. After all this, we zeroed in on a couple of large verticals within home services, beauty, home repairs& maintenance. We worked strongly on the model of service partners, especially on the training aspect and standardising the equipment, tools, products, pricing, deliverables and SOP. We set to control the service delivery through technology. We rigorously select our partners and provide services such as loans, bank account opening, insurance, branding and customers. We have been able to accomplish this through a full-stack or fulfilment-led approach, which considerably changed the game for us.

I still feel that in a sector like ours, there is a lot to be done and we have just scratched the surface of what is possible. So, the next 10 years are very exciting and the challenges to be encountered and our ability to overcome them will find the kind of company we create. Additionally, at some point in the journey, we'd like to take the company public sooner rather than later. This is going to be an important milestone for the team for our investors and stakeholders. These are the few experiences that I am looking forward to and excited about.



**What sets you apart in terms of the service providers or partners who are associated with the Urban Company?**

Since the early beginning, we were aware that if we have to win, we need to have a great experience for the customers, and equally for the service partners or service professionals. The proof of the great experience is 'earnings', meaning if the service professional is able to earn a lot more with us compared to elsewhere, there are high chances of word-to-mouth promotions leading to strong referrals. To highlight, the average earning on our platform today is between Rs 30,000 to 35,000 a month in India, which is almost double of what these service providers would be able to earn offline. Also, if I take the top 30 or 40% of professionals in every category, they would typically make more than 50,000 a month. This is coupled with other benefits that we provide, for example, free of cost life/accident/health insurance, along with a wide array of loans at competitive interest rates from our NBFC partners, access to free training and opportunity to upgrade, access to genuine and high-quality service products at lower prices than the retail market. All these factors have become a significant input into substantially improving the quality of experience for the professionals, simultaneously providing a sense of safety net. We have this saying internally that happy professionals lead to happy customers, resonating with the fact that 100% of our customers and service providers come through referrals and word of mouth.

**Being the biggest pull, earning is also a function of the price point. Is that going to be a challenge when you try to move to the tier three towns?**

I don't think at this point, we are a solution for Tier III cities. We are a solution for tier I and tier II India, which is the top 50 metros. From a future perspective, we want to drive our focus and energies on international markets. We have already expanded our services to Singapore, Australia, the UAE, and are looking forward to entering Saudi Arabia.

**What direction do you see in policy development for informal labour in India and challenges in the business transition to global markets?**

Last year, India being at the forefront of the policy development passed the 'The Code on Social Security,

2020' in the Parliament. This code has recognized gig workers as a formal labour class, identifying their rights and extending welfare measures with a social security fund. So, I think the policy in India is now clear with a forward-looking regulation and it's one of the best things that has happened as no entrepreneur wants to operate in an environment of policy uncertainty in terms of labour regulations. It has also made our role and responsibility as a platform clear. We are happy with the example that India has set for the rest of the world.

Also, in the global context, as a company, we are committed to complying with the letter of the law, as well as the spirit of the law in every market that we operate. This is primarily because we are not wedded to the business models, but to delivering phenomenal world-class services to our end consumers - being compliant with local regulation and local laws.

In terms of learnings and challenges, we have phenomenal cross-pollination between teams, with the core model being quite consistent across different markets, with the technology and product also being the same. So, we leverage our global markets to improve our service in India and we leverage our Indian market to improve our services globally - all in sync.

**What's next in the game with Urban Company?**

I wish I had a very interesting answer to this, but over the next 10 years we want to focus in supercharging the company over 50-100 times, take it global, take it public, keep building memorable service experiences for our customers, and in this process, keep creating more jobs for the local service providers.

**We read somewhere about your intense CrossFit workouts, love for adventure sports and activity-based vacations. Is this a personality trait that makes you seek adventure in all its forms?**

I am a regular guy with a larger-than-life ambition. I am fortunate to have an amazing team, which sees the vision, and the little that we have accomplished now has been largely by the team, their hard work and commitment. It is the team that keeps me on my toes and always prepared, even if it means giving the most honest opinions by calling a spade a spade. This helps me to keep myself grounded, humble and realize that we have a long way to go.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP



## Siddharth Shah

(PGP-2012)

**Co-Founder & CEO, Ascent Health & PharmEasy**

**You are one of the youngest awardees so far. What does the YAAA recognition mean to you?**

I feel honored, to say the least, that I get a chance to be recognized by the Institute. I'm very happy and delighted. I still think of myself very often on the other side as a student, because it's not even been eight years since I have been out of campus.

**What are your fondest memories from the campus?**

I think the fondest memories from campus are not just within the class, but also what happens outside of class. I have made some of my best friends over there. Also, it was the first time that I was away from home, as I was born and brought up in Mumbai. I always cherish the moments I shared with my dorm mates and friends from my section.

**You have been a go-getter. What all did it take to be a good entrepreneur?**

I think that was literally a 'trial by fire', like we say in our mother tongue 'अग्निपरीक्षी' for a very long time. Also, I think it was the conviction of my family, more than anything. It was also the people that were with us since the beginning - the earliest employees, earliest stakeholders and earliest partners that took us through. So, everybody knows of the hockey stick curve that's

• Together, Ascent & PharmEasy (now merged as API Holdings) form the Largest Digital Healthcare Platform in India connecting Patients - Practitioners - Pharmacies. It is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest buyer of medicines in India - accounting for 3% of all medicines sold in India.

• Siddharth has raised ~1,500 Crores (USD 210 Mn) from leading investors across the world including Canadian Pension Fund - CDPQ, Bessemer Venture Partners, F-Prime, Eight Roads, Think Investments and Leading Indian Investors and delivered returns ranging from 40% to 85% IRR to his investors.

• Ascent Health & Retail.IO connects 500 Pharma Companies through 1,200 Pharma Distributors with 45,000 Retailers in 35 Cities of India. PharmEasy is India's leading E-Pharmacy, with over 5 Million App Downloads and over 700,000 fulfilled orders every month.

• Within the PharmEasy ecosystem, Siddharth has developed a tele-consultation platform (DocStat) and practice management and digital clinic solution (DocOn).

• He is a three-time National Karting Champion with 10 National Level Race victories. He was a part of an Indian Team that won the Country's first 24-hour Asia-Pac International Kart Enduro Championship

happened since 2015-2016 when we started growing, but very few are aware of the challenges we faced during 2012-2015.

A lot of people might not know, but I had formed the company while leaving the campus. I still have the presentation, which I prepared as part of a course under Prof Anil Gupta, where the project that I had undertaken was to start an online pharmacy in India. I have been one of the few people who started a company while on campus, thinking about an actual online pharmacy and how it would transpire into e-health and a single digital platform for out-patients in India. Even today, I am still following the same dream, with evolution on that path.

In the initial years, we faced a lot of challenges, as that was the time that had no concept of an online pharmacy, digitization in healthcare or anything that would change the status quo of healthcare that was almost similar for the last 20-30 years. Considerately, when the consumer industries like FMCG and Telecom

were evolving drastically, there was limited innovation happening in the healthcare sector - meaning we had a lot of barriers to break and strong resistance to face. This phase was extremely difficult as there was vandalism at our hospital pharmacies, our associates beat up, goons being sent to my home, threats being given to my parents, demonstrations being carried against us and a lot more. In a way, this phase also motivated us to be headstrong with the thought that if we can break through this rigidity and resistance, the change we can bring would be drastic. From a real-time perspective, we started as dialhealth.com which failed, followed by Dial Health chain of retail stores which also failed. After two failed ventures, we drifted to our distribution business that was a success. So, on the back of our distribution business, we co-opted retailers and converted a B2B business into a business, where we had a B2B business but also got a demand for these retailers and started an online business. This was the entire journey of having a B2B business, working with more than 50,000 retailers in terms of one crore patients. But, it definitely didn't start so grand. In reality, we had an idea, we knew this is what we wanted to do, but had no clue how to go about it.

**Can you just give us an overview of the entire structure of the organization that you built and why was it able to grow so fast?**

So, think of it this way. Typically, within the healthcare space or the out-patient space, a large part, almost more than two-thirds of the money is spent by the patients on medicines. Within this, you have four critical stakeholders - pharma company, pharmacy as the retailer, patient and practitioner. Considering this, we have created a full-stack modelled digital platform that connects each of these interactions. Now, for example, at the back end, we have close to 2000 plus pharma companies and distributors that connect to over 65,000 retailers at the front end. Further, on a monthly basis, our platforms have a transaction value of over almost 600 crores in terms of medicines alone. So, the retailers are ordering 600 crores worth of medicines through our platforms, with a reach that has gone from 35 cities to more than 85 cities in the country. This makes us the Amazon equivalent for ordering medicines, but by retailers. Technically, we are solving for the supply of the retailers by creating a single platform, where we manage to buy medicines directly from the pharma companies, store them in our warehouse, handle the logistics & supply chain, typically deliver within 4-6

hours, provide credit, along with payment integration and payment reconciliation. This makes our platform an end-to-end solution.

In the next leg, we partner with the retailers, highlighting that we will not only help them with the supply, but also create demand. This demand comes from our App PharmEasy where the end users can place an order with a prescription. The order details go to the pharmacy within that zip code, based on certain algorithms like availability, turnaround time, rating and more. Following these initial steps, the medicine gets picked up and delivered to the customer.

I would also mention that last year we also acquired a platform called Medlife, which happened to be the second-largest e-pharmacy in the country. So, between PharmEasy and Medlife, we do close to about 200 crores of additional transaction, with more than 10 lakh patients every month and cumulatively more than one crore patients that are served. Now, this is the leg between the pharmacy and the patient.

Further, the next leg is between the patient and the practitioner, where we run the largest telemedicine platform in the country. In this leg, combining both PharmEasy and Medlife, we serve more than five lakh patients every month.

Furthermore, we also own the largest e-medical records platform in India, which today is with more than 6000 doctors, 3000 of them using it as their only means of communicating with patients. These doctors see anywhere between 6-9 lakh patients every single month.

So, we have created a digital ecosystem that connects each of these legs. We have also taken care of all use cases of demand and supply in simplistic terms, from a consumer perspective. Also, through our digital interventions, rather than recreating 10,000 or 30,000 pharmacies or their supply chain, we are instead focusing on reviving the physical infrastructure with our digital infrastructure on top. Here, the parallel example can be the global transition from cash to cheques, from cheques to card, from card to digital. But, in India, we went directly from cash to UPIs. I think, we are leapfrogging that in the healthcare context in the country, where we do not have any form of OPD insurance or digital space. Considering this fact, we are creating an ecosystem, where rather than spending decades/years to recreate the physical infrastructure, we are just overlaying the existing infrastructure with a digital infrastructure - to get efficiencies and make the consumer ultimately benefit in terms of access and affordability in healthcare.

**India is a branded generics market with a fragmented supply chain of medicines. How did that work to your advantage?**

See, I think, being branded generic is part of the challenge and a big opportunity at the same time. Unlike the US or most developed countries, where the doctor prescribes the name of a molecule, in India, the doctor prescribes a brand. What this means is, let's say, there are two lakh stock-keeping units (SKU) in India, with the average size of pharmacy being comparatively very small in terms of built area. By definition, the doctor or consumer will not get all the medicines required at a single pharmacy with access to probably 300-400 SKUs only. This is where we come in, being a single platform that would ensure that all the medicines are available at affordable rates. Similarly, for the retail pharmacies who would need to work with 100 suppliers to stock the medicines to solve the problem for the consumer – we consolidate at the back end, taking care of the supply & demand being a single point of connect for consumer/patient.

Here, the primary idea is to become a holistic point of care in the outpatient ecosystem. For example, if you are a patient with a non-communicable disease, you may be required to be on medicines for a lifetime, unfortunately. So, this would require you to visit the pharmacy multiple times for your medicines, with the pharmacy doing nothing beyond dispensing the medicines. But, once you are at our platform, we ensure that your tests are done on time, help you with annual diagnostics, supplements, the devices, and more - all at one place. At the base, we are becoming an adherence program for a patient to adhere to a certain medical protocol that ultimately is resulting in a better outcome.

**What are the additional challenges you face in the e-Pharmaceutical space?**

I think the biggest challenge is that we still don't have an insurance ecosystem in the outpatient space in the country, making people pay out of pockets for basic healthcare. We are limited to life insurance or health insurance, that waits for a catastrophe to happen. Globally, this insurance service is available, with a co-pay model. Considering the same, I think, we need to evolve to a model where the insurance is like a customized healthcare provider or payer for our health, where you're transferring the risk for management of health, not only for an adverse outcome. This can

**“ Through our digital interventions, rather than recreating 10,000 or 30,000 pharmacies or their supply chain, we are instead focusing on reviving the physical infrastructure with our digital infrastructure on top. ”**

be a tiered layer, where at a certain premium, you will get certain treatment taken care of. In the current phase, the patient's non-affordability to pay for the out-patient services means that the health is not being taken care of at the preventive stage itself, further leading to a stage where catastrophe can happen.

So, we need to create a robust out-patient insurance program that will drastically change the way we look at healthcare in the country. But, here the problem can be the adjudication of that program, viz., prevention of frauds, giving real-time treatment as that cannot be centralised. So, here, you can create a digital footprint, leverage the existing infrastructure where technology can handle the real-time adjudication. I think this is the biggest challenge and the opportunity of our time in the country.

**You are intensely focused on bringing radical reforms to the healthcare industry with the help of digital technologies. How do you plan to revolutionise this further?**

Our first focus was to integrate the supply for medicines because that is the largest part of the 'out of pocket' healthcare expense today. For example, for a patient living in a metro city, the cost of seeing a doctor can be Rs 500-2000/visit, the tests can be Rs 1000-2000/year, but the cost of medicines can be Rs 1000-2000/month. This means that the patient is spending 70-80% of the total expense on medicines and supplements. So, our first job was to create an entirely digital and integrated ecosystem for medicines, which is the largest component of outpatient care. Further and currently, we are thinking of expanding our scope to create a digital system where we can bring the tests, treatment, consultations and a lot more under one ambit - where the payment is not out of pocket, but as part of the out-patient insurance program. Hopefully, in the next 3 to 4 years, we are able to create impactful

digital infrastructure and network where we can be the leading providers of all healthcare services in any zip code within 3-4 hours. Once we are able to achieve this, then we can create a smart layer on top of it for the payer or insurer. I think our objective is to go beyond transactions or a person who's delivering medicines to a person who's your adherence partner in healthcare in outpatient insurance.

## **According to you, what does it take to be a good entrepreneur in the current context?**

I think, the last year has taught all of us a lot of things, especially, humility, acceptance that a lot of things are not under our control and empathy. Also, these three things have come out strongly to a lot of people. In my personal experience, my mother had covid in the last week of June, she was hospitalised for some time and luckily recovered well. But, what these instances do is to really connect you back to reality, in terms of where you are and how you are. Secondly, due to the pandemic, people are not afraid to change their lifestyle or to rely on the way they connect through digital resources. Who would have thought that students at IIMA would take online lectures? Who would have thought that people would trust online consultations with their doctors? This phase, therefore, presents an outstanding opportunity for people to build models for the new India. So, if you have empathy, humility, along with passion, perseverance and pivot model - it can make a huge difference.

Basically, start-up cannot be your side fling, and just like in a game of poker, you have to be all in as there is no other way to play the game right. But, you also need to draw the line in terms of following your passion and have the right approach, simultaneously having the ability to pivot.

I believe that the venture ecosystem today in India is far more conducive than what it was when I came out and only gets better because, as people have more and more success stories, the ability for people to be able to get the capital required to implement their pilot will always be there. If people do not have a lot of liabilities on their head, I would strongly encourage them to start building and experiment when they are young, preferably as soon as they leave campus.

## **Partnerships also form the bedrock of what you built together with your co-founders. What are your views?**

I believe, without the support I received from my partner, parents, folks in the community, and especially my co-founders and the teams we got alongside - I would not have been where I am today. My first co-founder, Hardik Dedhia, is the smartest of all of us. He went to the US to pursue his Masters and started working with NetApp that was a dream job for many during those times. It just took a one-hour conversation with him for him to send a resignation email to the Founder of NetApp. He called his parents later to inform that he has resigned and would be coming back to India in a month. He literally took the flight back. We pursued our journey of dailhealth.com together.

It was a few months later that my second co-founder, Harsh Parekh, joined me, with whom we ventured into the retail pharmacy, followed by distribution. I was fortunate that my friend from school, Dharmil Sheth joined me in March 2015 to launch PharmEasy. A few months later, Dhawal Shah who was a friend in junior college joined in. We all knew each other for a long time and that meant that we were not double guessing each other.

What I would want to highlight is that it wasn't just my family who was digging trenches with me, but Hardik's family had mortgaged their only home for us. I wouldn't ever encourage anybody to do something like this. So, long story short, the point is, you have to give your best and need support from people who will believe in you.

There were times when we did not know how we will pay the salary for the next month, but people helped us and we were not afraid to reach out for help. A big reason for our success has been grounded in that failure that when we were in bad times, it was the people who came and partnered with us. Even today, it is those partnerships that form the bedrock of our foundation. We are not recreating the supply chain, but we are partnering with 2000 distributors for the supplies. We are not recreating the retail chain, but we are partnering with 60,000 retailers instead. I think, the 'ethos of partnership' of leveraging what you have and building your ideas on top of that comes a lot from the early days of struggle and humility, where it is the partnerships that saved us.

## **Tell us something about your karting interest and what has been your most memorable experience so far.**

I would still love to cart today, but unfortunately, we don't have a good karting track in Mumbai anymore. Also, one of my dreams is to create a great karting

track, if not in Mumbai, but somewhere in the vicinity. So, my inability to kart is compensated through my immense passion for cars. But, in my view, karting had prepared me for what was to come in my life. Also, karting is one of the few sports where you get a chance to consistently prove yourself over a period of time, unlike most leagues.

In fact, Dharmil, who is one of my co-founders, has been karting with me professionally. So, we both used to sit on the same bench in the school, we raced together and now are partners.

If you excel in any sport, it transforms you into a fantastic business person. I think a large part of my success in karting was due to my prior success in skating. I still remember, my parents used to take me to BKC which was like a barren area, at 5 am every day,

for two hours of practice under coach Mr Virag Patel. So, the killer instinct that came from my days in skating obviously helped me in karting.

For me, the most memorable day in karting has also been the scariest day, when my mother who had no clue about karting saw me driving at more than 120 km on the race track at the age of 12 or 13. She literally pulled me out of the track, which is two days before the first national race of my life. This is when, the General Manager, Mr Shirke approached my mother and gave her some confidence beyond the obvious petrification she had for my life. I came third in that race, but it became an insane validation as if someone entered Formula One. I still remember that I cried on the podium. I think, this is the most vivid memory that I have from my racing career.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP



### SUMEET MEHTA

(PGP 1999)

Co-Founder & CEO, LEAD School

**When was the last time you were on campus?**

I think we came to campus in 2014 for the 15<sup>th</sup> year reunion of the batch which was a lot of fun. I mean, after campus, I was in P&G and later on moved to Singapore, so didn't have an occasion to visit the campus.

**So, you have not seen the recent construction that's happening on campus with a JSW School of Public Policy, new academic block, Sports Complex,**

*As Co-Founder of LEAD School, Sumeet is revolutionizing education in the country by implementing Integrated Learning Systems in affordable schools in Tier 2-4 towns. Over the last 3 years, LEAD has grown into one of India's fastest-growing, most innovative and largest education companies, serving 7 lakh students, 25,000 teachers and 1800 schools. It is the only company in the country that publishes student achievement and teacher performance data.*

*Sumeet bootstrapped the organization with his own savings for the first 5 years and then raised Series A and Series B with Elevar Equity, one of India's foremost impact venture capital firms and from Westbridge Capital, one of India's foremost Investment firms. Prior to this, he was Chief Executive Officer at Zee Learn (2007- 2012). He transformed the institution from a pre-school franchise company with a revenue of Rs. 20 Cr to a Rs. 100 Cr education company with a presence in pre-schools, K-10 schools, School solutions and Vocational Education. He led the company to a listing on the NSE with a market cap of Rs. 800 Cr. He also led the development of iLLUME and Litera Octave, new-to-the-world pedagogies that set the bar of innovation in both preschools and schools. In the past, he led P&G's businesses in the Asia Pacific for 8 years.*

**and much more coming up. We would absolutely welcome you back whenever possible.**

I would love to. The last time I came, I was just astounded by the shape that the new campus has taken. We didn't know it was that massive. But I'm sure a lot more has happened in the last six years.

**Absolutely! Taking that further, what are your fondest memories from the campus.**

That is a very deep question. I think most of all it's friendships. I was in D12 where I met friends for life, along with a lot of friends from Section C in the first year. These are the things that stick with you. I also feel that adversity brings people together. At IIMA, with the academic rigour and the intense environment, you tend to lean on your peers. And then these connections stay with you forever.

Beyond everything else, there are some professors whose personalities have left an indelible mark more than their teaching. Prof Jain, Prof Balki and Prof Ravi C are the three that come to mind, and then Prof. Indira. I think they just taught you the power of simplicity, not only in thinking, but also in living.

So, I would say that these friendships and life learnings, are what I've taken from the campus.

**What does the YAAA and recognition mean to you?**

I guess, I have a bit of an imposter syndrome where I ask and wonder whether I really deserve the recognition, because when at IIMA, I was surrounded by really smart and capable people. When I entered IIMA, I was arrogant and brash. But, when I went out, I was a lot more humble after observing the brilliance around me. So, I think, at every point in life when I get an accolade or success, I have learned to ascribe it more to fortune than to my personal worth. I also believe that a lot of things have to come together for such things to happen.

I am sure that there are far more deserving individuals, but one thing that I definitely see is that within entrepreneurship, there are not many people who have won this award for educational technology or education before this. Considering that, it is a recognition of the fact that we need smart people to solve tough

problems. Coming out of IIMA, the natural course could be to start a business or become a business leader in a large company. But if more people can dedicate themselves to solve tough problems, such as education and schooling - data shows that learning outcomes in Indian schools are really poor - these real problems get recognized. I think there is a wider ramification here. This award tells people that beyond the intrinsic reward of self-satisfaction there's also external recognition if you try your hand at solving tough problems. So for me, that's the truly elevating part.

**From management leadership roles to being an educator in India - how has the journey been?**

First, let me start with P&G which is a great company to work with. I would say it's a second university where whatever you have missed at IIMA is taught, in terms of thinking, interpersonal relationship, managing people, being technical and more. I was, however, convinced that living outside of India and working in P&G didn't seem to be my life goal. I have earlier shared my story about coming from a small town, with both parents working as teachers that allowed me to see education up close and personal. The scenario also allowed me to experience the gap between small-town India, large cities and metros - first hand. So, there was a burning desire, although, initially it was subdued but as you start to take care of your basic needs, you start to wonder about the meaning of life and what are you here for! I was very clear that if that was a burning desire, I needed to do something about it. That's why the move back to India, working at Zee Learn and then setting up LEAD has been a fulfilling journey.

I read about the principles of ikigai that if you are able to find the intersection of your greatest joy and the world's greatest need, you'd be a fool to let it go and my sense is, I was fortunate enough to get it early. 8 years out of campus is not too late! I became clear that solving the education problem is going to give me tremendous joy and I would do it, even if no one pays me. The fact that we've been able to now build a business out of it is, I guess, a secondary benefit but the privilege of being able to solve this problem and being able to see that this problem can be solved at scale has been amazing. I consider myself fortunate to be able to do this.

**What sets LEAD School at par in education innovation? What is your success mantra?**

There are two aspects to this. Firstly, if you think about Indian education, especially K-12, most of the core education happens in school or is supposed to happen in school. But, because it doesn't happen so well in schools, we have a secondary market of tuitions existing in India. My thesis has been that if schools do their job well, not as many students would take tuition and we have an opportunity to give them their childhood back beyond the strenuous school-tuition time commitment.

Now, the way we approach the problem at LEAD is at the genesis of the difference. We never set out to create a big company. I think our problem statement was to understand the root cause of the poor learning outcomes in affordable schools in most of India and have a chance to solve the problem at scale. So, the initial three-four years of actually running our own school were instrumental in developing the solution, because you have to first understand the consumer need and then the consumer problem. As Prof Jain used to always ask us, "Who are You!?"

When you are sitting in a parent's house you can clearly see their aspirations for their child. They see quality English medium education as this propulsive force that will allow them to escape reality and shift orbit. But these aspirations are dashed when the child actually goes to school and the promises aren't delivered. The reasons behind this are many, there are three to four rungs of the ladder missing for the child to take that leap. As a school, our job was to build those rungs for the child to take those steps, but in our education systems, these rungs are missing.

At LEAD, we figured out to teach English to non-English learners or non-native English speakers. Now, this is a problem which has been solved in other countries, but unfortunately in India, probably because of the British legacy, we tend to teach English as a subject. So, back in 2013, we realized that we have to teach English as a skill. This fundamental decision led to a lot of second and third order benefits. So, once a child becomes proficient in English, they could learn Maths, Science and Social Studies in that language. So, this is how we solved the learning challenge first. Further, we developed a schooling management system, which we call the 'School Integrated System' to ensure that the required practices are embedded.

The whole transition required rolling up the sleeves. We started with 14 students and now we serve 7 lacs, since the last time we spoke during the YAAA ceremony. In my view, we are seeing this level of adoption because the solution has been developed with a very clear focus on solving the problem and not with the intent only to sell.

**Pandemic's impact on education has seen an immense disruption and technology orientation. What are your views?**

If I have to speak realistically about what is happening today, there is a bit of over-exuberance currently. If you think about it from first principles, children up to the age of 12 years haven't developed the ability for metacognition or self-direction. So, they need mediated learning through schooling. This is different from higher education where there can be a case made for some online learning, although the campus experience can't be replicated. But in schools, the need is far deeper. If you think about it, a school actually fulfils three needs, viz., day-care, socializing and knowledge transfer. But, we tend to over emphasize the knowledge transfer part. So, what I believe is that online learning would follow the same curve as digital payments during the demonetisation, before coming to a certain level of normal. Currently, in our schools, we are seeing attendance rates of 60-70% as parents do realise the need and importance of the other 2 parameters, beyond knowledge transfer.

The sustainable change we might see is most of the schools embracing technology and innovation in education that would enable them to be ready for future disruptions. There would be increased efforts to incorporate digital mechanism in teaching, even in physical classrooms. We might see more connection between in-school learning to at-home learning. Also, in my view, only the top 10-15% of the socio-economic segment would continue with online learning due to easy access to good devices and data, but most of the country will go back to the regular.

**What dynamics have changed for you in this revolutionary phase?**

We have grown more than 2 folds, from 800 schools to 1800 schools, even during the pandemic. That's because we were designed as an integrated and tech-based system since 2015 as we saw it as the only way



of scaling consistency and with quality in education delivery. So, during Covid, it was easier for us to get all our schools online or enable the hybrid model when schools are opening back. Primarily, we see ourselves as a EdTech company where technology is not the end, but the means to solve the schooling problem with seamless-uninterrupted-effective learning, despite all the disruptions.

While the recent study by Azim Premji University states that online education is ineffective in providing any actual education in India, I would like to share that we conducted the midterm exams and despite all the disruptions our students achieved 72% mastery. We were definitely down than our normal benchmark, so we need to get back to physical classrooms as soon as possible.

### **What are your thoughts on the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)?**

In my personal view, it is still not as forward-looking as one would want. But it is, I would say 70-80% there, which is not too bad because it's a consensus-based document. There are a few aspects that still keeps it back, for example, overemphasis on books seems like a backward step because all our information gathering today as adults has gone beyond books. Also, the NEP 2020 further states about the 'medium of instruction will be the home or local or regional language or mother tongue until at least Grade 5', which according to me has massive challenges in implementation and a contradiction to parent's aspirations of English medium learning.

There are also good aspects of NEP 2020, like building flexibility after middle years or the emphasis on holistic-assimilative-experiential learning in the younger years. But these approaches have been already adopted by many good curriculum companies such as ours.

### **As the policy stands today, what are your recommendations to make it better?**

One recommendation would have been to shift the emphasis on learning part beyond textbooks to other resources/anchors like videos, activities, group

**“ I think our problem statement was to understand the root cause of the poor learning outcomes in affordable schools in most of India and have a chance to solve the problem at scale. ”**

work and more. We are obsessed with textbooks and all policy is unfortunately seen through that lens. The second recommendation would be to reduce regulatory control on schools. We can't control at the state level which book the child will read for each subject. There should be emphasis on decentralisation of the decision making at the school versus controlling it at the state or central level if we are looking at cutting-edge changes in education delivery in our country.

### **What are your future big ideas in education innovation and delivery?**

Any school that partners with Lead School experiences an orbit shift in delivering education that prepares children for life, not just for exams. We are building our curriculum, pedagogy and technology in this direction. Imagine the unleashing of potential that will happen when every child in India can access an education that makes them ready for life, irrespective of where they are born!

Our ambition is to offer this learning to each child in the country, so they can explore their maximum potential.

### **When not working, what are the little things that you enjoy doing the most?**

There's hardly any time when I'm not working because I think, for me, honestly 'Work is not work'. So, if I'm reading, I'm typically reading about education, building organizations and building self – and then translating this experience directly to my work. I must add that during covid, we have been particular about carving out time for the family, especially for my two children. So that's an indulgence I allow myself.

## PUBLIC SERVICE



## MOHIT GARG

(PGP 2012)

District Police Chief of Left Wing  
Extremism (LWE) Hub

**Many congratulations on your wedding. How did it go, especially with the current pandemic restrictions?**

Considering the fact that I am based in Delhi and my better half is from Bangalore, the covid restrictions made the whole event hectic. Initially, we planned a wedding in Delhi but had to shift all the arrangements to Bangalore at a short notice due to resurge in Covid-19 cases after Diwali. But, the good part was that we saved a lot of money that would have gone behind the 'big fat Indian wedding' dreams.

**How has IIMA shaped you as a person?**

IIMA was a life changing experience for me, primarily because that was the first time I actually went out of my comfort zone after pursuing my schooling and engineering from institutions very close to my home. IIMA was a different territory altogether, and the kind of diversity I had around quite influenced my transition. In terms of leadership, it was the first time that I tried my hands at a student body election. I was a Secretary during my tenure and it was a wonderful experience. The amalgamation of everything shaped my path of joining civil services, to some extent.

**From big corporate dreams to Public Services - what influenced this transition?**

- Supervision & control of 30 units with strength 7000+; Strategically planned & executed ops resulting in 50% reduction in LWE violence
- Appreciated by the Election Commission of India for ensuring free, fair & peaceful elections with highest ever voter turnout despite threats
- Supervision & control of 80 units with strength 18000+; successfully controlled LWE activities: 344 insurgents arrested & 42 neutralized
- Created short movies, local dialect songs & android games to raise awareness about LWE violence & to encourage surrenders
- Started community policing initiative 'Manva Puna Bijapur': reached out to 35000+ villagers (25000+ youth) to promote peace & equality

**Key Recognitions**

- Received National Award 2018 for 'Security Management during elections' in worst LWE affected district from the President of India
- Conferred one of the rarest honors for bravery by Indian Police - 1st Bar Police Medal for Gallantry (PMG) for leading successful missions
- Selected for World Governance Expedition Singapore & Asia Pacific Young Leaders Conferences in Thailand & Sri Lanka
- Awarded Shield by State Cabinet Minister for crime & incident free conduct of 20-day Rajim Kumbh Mela visited by >2.5 Mn people

I drew the inspiration for joining civil services from my father, who encouraged me to see it as a prospective career because of the scope of impact on the larger society. I wanted to complete my studies, so I opted for IIMA where we had a chance to interact with many senior bureaucrats during a course in the second year. Other than that, there was also a perspective that we built about how the private and public sectors are entrenched. That was also the time when PPP was a buzzword, highlighting that there is a synergy possible between the two sectors. Following this, I was also driven by a course on energy management, working with the Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad, interaction with foreign exchange students and more that transpired my interest in joining the Indian civil services.

**How easier and how difficult it is to effectively address the Left Wing Extremist insurgency holistically?**

In pockets like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Telangana and certain parts of Andhra Pradesh - Left Wing Extremist insurgency continues to be a major internal security challenge due to its origin. It started with an ideology where lordships were taking control of the entire land and engaging the residents in bonded labour, depriving them of basic rights. Over the years, the resistance to such an existence drifted to violence, petty fights, and attack on the democratic systems at large. This situation also became a means of earning illicit money through multiple sources, mostly contractors. The problem affects a major part of the population in these areas, but it is worthy to note that the population in sheer numbers is much lesser as tribal areas are very scarcely populated. For instance, currently, I am in the Narayanpur district in Chhattisgarh where the area is approximately 7000 sq km, but the population is only 1.5 lacs - which is probably one of the lowest population densities in the country or even the world. Amongst the 1.5 lakh people, more than a lakh still live in the garb of fear, uncertainty and insecurity because of Naxalism. This applies to the entire Bastar and multiple other pockets of the country, making Left Wing Extremist insurgency such a serious problem. Secondly, there exists dichotomy and goonism. On one hand, you will find press releases or political wing of insurgents wanting equality for tribals and villages from the government, but on the second hand, the organisation does not let development happen. There are instances where they have vandalised roads, hospitals, schools and other basic infrastructure for water, electricity or mobile towers. This manifestation over time has led to the rise in goonism. In these circumstances, the locals do not have access to the mainstream government and are left at the mercy of armed goons - leaving serious repercussions. This is why the work that we do in these insurgency prone areas has become so important for the government and people.

**The Government has formulated a National Policy and Action Plan adopting a multi-pronged strategy in the areas of security, development, ensuring rights and entitlement of local communities etc. How difficult is the implementation or execution?**

It is frankly quite difficult. I shall try to explain

**“ if you venture into the village which was at a distance of 20 km and unconnected, it is now well connected and flourishing with basic amenities like education, healthcare, government jobs, self-employment and more. ”**

the same through an example, for instance, let's say there is a village which is at a distance of 20 km from the district headquarter. Currently, the village does not have the basic amenities like road, school, PHC or hospital. This village also falls under a settlement, let's say, of 7-8 villages that fall under the same Panchayat, with a population of roughly 500 to 1000. So, these people are living under the threat of Naxals who move freely in these areas - with guns or without guns. Under these stressful circumstances, we start to try and defend the problem by building relationships with the villagers gradually. This process takes a lot of time considering the fact that Naxals are frequent in these areas and have the tendency to kill the villagers mercilessly.

So, to whatever extent a villager is empowered or eager to join the Government – the fear of life is always consistently present at all times. At our level, we try to give them the confidence to reach the government or administration, followed by providing other facilities such as infrastructure development. So, if you venture into the village which was at a distance of 20 km and unconnected, it is now well connected and flourishing with basic amenities like education, healthcare, government jobs, self-employment and more. This whole process of creating a safer environment takes immense efforts and a lot of time.

**You have received the highest accolades for an immense contribution towards combating Left-Wing Extremism, especially National Award 2018 for 'Security Management during elections' in the worst LWE affected district from the President of India. What is your success mantra?**

The election was definitely a challenge. I was posted in district Bijapur that time and it is the second most adversely affected area in terms of left wing

insurgencies with more than 15,000 security personnel deployed in a single district to counter Naxalism. So, during elections, the Naxals do not only push away the villagers from casting a vote, but also attack them, as elections are not part of their agenda. Considerately, there have been instances where the fingers and thumbs of villagers, who have casted a vote, are cut by the Naxals. Apart from such instances, the Naxals continuously change strategies and interventions, for example, planting explosive devices or ambushing near polling booths. Aware of the damage that can happen, we had to tighten the security to maximum levels and simultaneously make the villagers comfortable with the fact that they would be safe during the election beyond the deeply entrenched fear of the Naxals. So, I started a community policing initiative named 'Manva Puna Bijapur', which is a Gondi term meaning 'Our new Bijapur'. Through this initiative, we reached out to and interacted with 35000+ villagers (25000+ youth) to promote peace and equality – over a period of one year before the election. Simultaneously, through this initiative, we liaised with local administrative departments, as we started incorporating change through night camps, cultural programs, education & awareness tours and immersive connections – making the locals understand the available facilities by the government and avenues that would imbibe in them the need of participation in democracy. Following the constant efforts, the election phase did not report of any regular incident related to Naxalism or casualties, which was a big thing to experience.

**You have also been conferred one of the rarest honors for bravery by Indian Police - 1st Bar Police Medal for Gallantry (PMG) for leading successful missions. Please share your experience.**

Basically, all the missions that I took part in were mostly during my Additional SP tenure in district Bijapur. Also, a lot of my missions and operations are planned in core areas where the insurgency presence is very high and it isn't possible for other departments to go. So, in these high-risk pockets, I always feel that if I am sending personnel to risk their lives, I should also be a part of such missions, risking my life too. This is extremely difficult following many reasons, like, walking in the toughest terrains for 25-30 km a day. Also, during these missions, we cannot use the tracks that are being used by locals due to threats, such as the Naxalites deployed improvised explosive devices or spikes or ambush. These threats are accompanied

**“ There was also a perspective that we built about how the private and public sectors are entrenched. ”**

by setbacks like no network connectivity and non-availability of medical assistance. So, being part of such missions for a good 6-7 days, have led me to understand the ground realities that my teams generally face and solutions that can be incorporated. There was this particular mission which was planned for 4 days, but I extended it for 2 more days following intel that there is a movement of some 15-20 armed Naxalites, 5 km south-east of our location. That mission was dangerous, but a success as we managed to arrest 3 Naxalites who are serving sentence in jail currently.

**You were also awarded Shield by State Cabinet Minister for crime and incident free conduct of 20-day Rajim Kumbh Mela visited by more than 2.5 Mn people. This is completely different from combating Left-Wing Extremism. How did you manage?**

I understand that the two are completely different domains, but if I talk about the Rajim Kumbh Mela, it is a mini Kumbh Mela for Chhattisgarh. It is big in terms of population ratio/proportion of the state, meaning high probability of instances like pickpocketing, robberies, molestation, drunk incidents, rampant road accidents, difficult traffic movements and a lot more. The 20-day Rajim Kumbh Mela needed a tedious and labour-intensive preparation of more than 30 days. We inculcated technology, CCTV deployment with extensive monitoring and patrolling with a ready reporting mechanism. We gave the utmost priority to traffic monitoring as it was the major motion net, along with an active disaster response team that could tackle the storm during the mela without any causality. Also, we established a strong communication-information network with the government and also the other stakeholders – considering the sentimental values of religious events of this calibre.

Further, to compare this event with Naxalism prone areas – there the situation is very different, uncertain and also involves fear of life – making it a completely different ball game. In normal regions, there always exists some form of law & order where there may be loss of property, but the chances of loss of lives are

fairly negligible. The challenges in both domains are different, but the basic thing that is common between the two is how we build a dialogue and establish trust with people.

**You have brought together many creative solutions like short movies, local dialect songs, android games etc. to raise awareness about LWE violence and to encourage surrenders. Please share a bit more on these initiatives.**

I think this is where I am always being thankful to IIMA that gave me a perspective on marketing, branding, understanding consumer behaviour and more. So, if we take the government as a service provider and everybody as a consumer, we can definitely have a clear understanding of creative solutions to communicate what we want to do and how we want to do it.

For example, if we consider Bastar that is considered nothing beyond the heavy insurgency. In my view, beyond everything else, this place is vibrant in culture, heritage, scenic beauty and environmental diversity. So, if we draw inspiration from the surroundings to bridge the existing gap in communication - there is nothing better than creative solutions that would work best in these areas.

**When not in uniform, what are the little things that you enjoy the most in life?**

I majorly focus on fitness and reading books. In areas of good network connectivity, that I rarely get, I enjoy Netflix as a luxury and unwind over the good old days.

<Transcribed from video interview>

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I, Victor Pereira, hereby, declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**Ahmedabad,**  
Feb 2021

**Victor Pereira**  
**Publisher, The WIMWIAN**

# SAERC PRESENTED THE FIRST-EVER EDITION OF WIMWIANS' CUP 2020

While juggling in seemingly never-ending chaos of classes, quizzes, cases, and study groups, it was often the hobbies and club events in the Institute that brought the much-needed respite from the rigorous IIMA schedule. The Students' Alumni and External Relations Committee presented the alumni community an opportunity to relive the campus nostalgia and reconnect through the first-ever edition of an alumni inter-batch competition, WIMWIAN's Cup, from December 11-22, 2020. The virtual event put together several competitions and many fun events for everybody. Here, the SAERC team shares a brief of the event.

The Students' Alumni and External Relations Committee, in collaboration with the SMAs at IIMA, planned introduced the first-ever alumni inter-batch event, the WIMWIANS' Cup, on 11th December 2020, which we also celebrate as WIMWIANS' Day. The idea with WIMWIANS' Cup was to host a series of playful competitions and discussions for the alumni to help them reconnect with their alma mater and fellow alumni filling in the void left by the suspension of all major alumni association activities due to the pandemic.

We had a solid roster of events planned for the WIMWIANS' Cup. While some of the events like the IIMA Virtual Walk, Memoirs, Shades of Love, Guess the Faculty, IIMA Escape Room and the WIMWIANS' Quiz were intended to take the participants on a nostalgic trip down memory lane, reminding you of your stay here in the institute. Another set of events primarily focused on indoor hobbies and interests of

the alumni. We had a Cooking challenge where the participants had to make a 3-course meal, along with Dance 30, Cadenza, which were virtual dance and music showoffs. We could not have imagined hosting WIMWIANS' cup without having sports events in it. In the virtual format, we hosted Poker, Chess, Ludo, and fun games like Pictionary and Two Truths and a Lie.

In the first year, almost 300+ alumni from across batches participated in WIMWIAN's Cup 2020. A humble yet encouraging start. Hopefully, in the coming years, we will invite more of the alumni to the campus to participate in WIMWIANS' Cup, making the event a crucial cog in enhancing the bond of the alumni with the institute and the students. In the end, the SAERC team would like to express its gratitude to all the participants, and the SMAs who contributed in making this event a huge success, calls upon them to make it a build upon the good work done in the coming years.

<b>1 AGREE TO DISAGREE</b> Can you still pull-off the heated discussions during CPs? Teams will have to negotiate on the sample contracts, and arrive for the best deal on contract terms. The savings would be evaluated based on the ZOPA and BATNA.	<b>2 CHESS</b> Time for the mind games! A Swiss Tournament in which each participant will have to play a total of 4-6 matches of 3 mins each, with random opponents generated by the platform.	<b>3 GUESS THE FACULTY</b> How well do you remember the silly-gaffes of every professor? Participants must solve puzzles based on stories, professors' memorable moments of their youth, and guess who the professor is.	<b>4 IIMA VIRTUAL WALK</b> Walk with us around the campus virtually! We'll reward participants who check-in throughout the walk. A fun surprise gift, sponsored by SAERC, for us know if they want to participate in particular.	<b>5 LUDO</b> A blend of luck and logic, to let all your pieces reach the goal! Participants will be required to download the app and participate with the online leaderboard.	<b>6 PUBLIC POLICY MANTHAN</b> Participants will debate the latest regulations, issues and amendments specific to institutes, to be raised by the participants.		
<b>7 COOKING CHALLENGE</b> Engage sync to a 3-course meal prepared as a team! Each team member will be allowed to cook either a starter, main course or dessert but the team has to prepare an entire 3 course meal.	<b>8 DANCE 30</b> Opportunity to groove till your favourite tunes! An online dance challenge wherein participants need to upload their dance videos (creativity is appreciated) and guess likes on social media.	<b>9 IIMA ESCAPE ROOM</b> Relive the thrill of mystery rooms with your batch mates! Participants (in teams) will have to solve ruses based on life in IIM A to walk through a virtual escape room.	<b>10 MEMOIRS</b> Here to reminisce for all IIM A alumni! Read the most memorable stories (written from the campus days) or click a batch photo (taken with any permission) that reminds you of the journey at IIMA.	<b>11 MOVIE REVIEW</b> Making connections with the national award! Participants (in teams) to review any one movie of their choice, and submit they will have to submit comments in a Pleasant Pictionary format.	<b>12 ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE</b> Share your opinions! The panel will bring alumni who have actively worked in their respective fields in one platform to have a Virtual Round Table Conference.		
<b>13 FITNESS CHALLENGE</b> Leverage the most underrated good thing of the pandemic- exercising! Fitness of the batch will be determined on the basis of activities like skipping rope, jumping jacks etc. The participants will need to send a video and cumulative of the batch will be used.	<b>14 FUN GAMES</b> A fun-filled event planned for reliving the stress-buster nights in the campus! Games like Pictionary, Taboo, two truths and one lie with a common theme of memories, places, and other key characteristics of IIM A.		<b>15 MUSIC</b> The greatest music of your time! It's an opportunity of the moments of childhood & college days. Participants need to pick any IIMA batch and compose a song with your memories to any batch of their choice.	<b>16 PICK A PAINT</b> Let the great minds of you have their 30's of imagination of the moments of childhood & college days. Participants need to pick any IIMA batch and compose a song with your memories to any batch of their choice.	<b>17 SHADES OF LOVE</b> Go shopping through the memories of the IIM A days! Use the items of the IIM A to create the perfect love story. The winners would be asked to share a short video about the love story.	<b>18 PITCH PLEASE</b> An original competition where who, what, where & how WIMWIANS' Cup is going to be given a 1PT. The winner team would be provided of the resources which will help them to execute.	<b>19 POKER</b> Still remember your friends who were always... Participants will be required to download the app and participate with the online leaderboard.

# DOWN THE MEMORY LANE - THE GOLDEN YEARS

By Mr Sharad C Sharma (PGP 1971), written on the occasion of Golden Jubilee year of the 1971 batch. The narrative gives details of his sweet memories and experience during the stay at the campus.

गर खुदा मुझसे कहे , कुछ माँग ए बंदे मेरे  
मैं ये माँगू IIMA के , दो साल फिर दे दे मुझे।

If God asks to grant me a wish, I will request to give me an opportunity once more to live the two years which I passed at IIMA.

Today, celebrating my golden jubilee of being at IIMA of 1969-71 batch, I recollect the nostalgic golden memories of those two years.

**PLANNING AND DILEMMA TO JOIN IIMA** The journey started early 1969 when I decided to pursue my management studies after completing B. Tech in Chemical Engineering and two years of work experience in Shriram Fertilizers. The job was in a factory at Kota, which happens to be my home town. It was a small town and during those days, people there were not familiar or impressed with management education. For them having an engineering degree was good enough, particularly when you also have a job in your own home town. There was discouragement from my parents and my seniors. They said it is not wise to leave a secured job as you will not be sure of employment after your studies. Well that was the thinking during those years but somehow I was determined to pursue management studies. After consulting a few friends and knowing that job is virtually assured after PGDBM, applied in IIMA, gave entrance examination, interview and was selected. And my journey began which was to give not only my golden two years on campus but laid a solid foundation on which my life and career were built.

**SIR, I WISH TO LEARN THIS NEW KNOWLEDGE** Before going further, I will like to narrate an interesting conversation during my admission interview. I had cleared the written test, group discussions and my academic record was good being the Gold Medalist from LIT Nagpur. Finally, I appeared for the personal interview. The interviewers asked many questions on

economics, politics and world events. Many of them I was unable to answer as during my engineering education I concentrated only on engineering subjects and to achieve my goal of receiving the gold medal. Finally, the committee asked the last question as to why I wish to join IIMA. I replied 'Sir, you noticed that I have little knowledge of many fields outside my engineering subject. I, therefore, wish to gain all-round knowledge by joining management studies here'. Well, they smiled, I was selected and here I am to continue with the story of my days at IIMA.

**WHAT NO RAGGING?** We received a letter of admission with details of IIM location. I reached Ahmedabad and was happily surprised to see a 'welcome board' at the railway station that was put by our seniors with further guidance to reach campus. Still, the experience of ragging in engineering hostel was fresh in my mind and I thought that this welcome was the calm before the storm. Thus, worried and little frightened, I reached the campus ready to face the music. Lo here! a big surprise was waiting for me. Our seniors warmly received and greeted me, offered tea/coffee, biscuits and helped in settling. That was my first day of starting a journey full of golden memories during stay at the campus.

**A NEW DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE** The studies and classes started. Well, there was no Harvard Steps, no big modern class rooms or the main plaza as it stands today. Few pictures attached by me will give the glimpse of old structures which stood at that time and the new one at present (Sorry during those days we did not have mobiles to click pictures and selfies. In fact, the whole campus had one landline for students).

Basically, there were 3 class rooms, 16 dorms, and few of the houses allotted to us as hostels. But there was a beauty, romance and liveliness in those structures. There was a central lawn where we used to

# SPECIAL FEATURES



sit in evenings to listen to pleasant music and enjoy the chit chat sessions along with coffee. I wonder if any of my batchmates will forget the lovely music room where we used to listen to songs, ghazals and instrumental music. Unfortunately, smoking was common during those days and ashtrays from the music room used to often disappear and had to be replaced. One day someone

got a brilliant idea and painted on ashtray with 'Stolen from Music Room' and Lo! the disappearance stopped. The instance is embedded in my memory as a unique idea, a management technique to control pilferage.

Still more pleasant surprises were to come. The major teachings were through case studies method, a novelty for us. While the class discussions were going on, there was a few minutes break and the coffee was served in the class room. Unlike our engineering days, it was a unique experience and I was already imagining myself like managers in a board room. During the days which followed, we used to be invited by professors for tea, coffee with snacks at their houses. It strengthened our bond with them and I hope the practice is being followed presently too. I am also giving you a glimpse of 1972 IIMA newsletter mentioning important news about our Director - Professor Ravi Mathai.



**PROFESSOR MOTE & MALYA** I can remember almost all the professor's name and their teaching style even after 50 years. The one which left a lasting impact on me was the team of Prof Mote and Prof Malya. Their method was quite aggressive and Prof Mote will sometimes throw chalks at us, if we had not studied and prepared the case properly. I am sure none of my classmates can forget the relevant cost concept hammered in our mind. Even today sometimes in sleep I get the nightmare of Prof Mote's missile hitting me.

If I don't mention one incident my batchmates will not forgive me. Prof Mote used to get angry if he found



# SPECIAL FEATURES

out that some of us didn't read or prepare the case. Then he will say 'Either you leave the class or I will leave the class'. We will meekly go out and next time will be well prepared. We had one classmate 'Grover' who was also a unique character. Call him genius, crazy or whatever. One day Prof Mote told him his pet sentence 'Either you leave or I will leave the class'. Grover coolly told him that he will not leave the class but Prof may leave. We were all stunned and shocked. Prof Mote just waited few minutes and then left the class. Next day Prof Mote came to the class - he smilingly and very sportingly said that we were the first batch who had made him leave the class. Everything was normal following that instance, but we loved and respected Mote & Malya team more after that.

**WAC (WRITTEN ANALYSIS AND COMMUNICATION)** It has been a half century gap and memories are not that sharp as it used to be. Many of the memorable moments are little hazy in my mind and requiring bit of efforts. Luckily, I am the blessed one and not affected by Alzheimer and can recall the wonderful instances leaving a lasting impact on me. Apart from Mote-Malya courses, another course which helped during my career was WAC by Prof Keshav Prasad. We were given a topic or subject and were asked to write our report/analysis of the same. Prof explained us the details with instructions that report should be precise, without a single unnecessary word or sentence and we should go through it many times before submitting the same. I remember writing, rewriting the report and reading it at least 20 times to trim it, removing extra words etc. Then in class discussion, Prof will tell us how it could be further improved. It was not the time of MS Word or Power Point in those days and our effective communication was the way to impress higher management. Thanks to this training, my report written after South East Asia tour, for exploring the possibilities of putting up a plant, was circulated among top management by the instructions of the Chairman. His comments to senior managers were that "This is how you have to write and present a report". This incident is 48 years old and I had to thank my IIMA training for the same.

**NOW, THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD** And friends, all this luxury, heavenly experience, single room dorm accommodation etc. at what cost? Well, be prepared for the shock. We had to pay a princely sum

of Rs 1630/- for the year. Did I hear someone saying "Is it a joke"? OK, so you don't believe me. Please see the Annexure I giving details of fees for all three terms. I am sure some of you might be recovering from the shock.

ANNEXURE I  
POLYMER POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMME IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (1969-71)

Schedule for payment of fees

	I Term	II Term	III Term
Fees due on	July 1, 1969	Oct. 15, 1969	Jan. 15, 1970
1. Mess Deposit *	Rs. 250.00	-	-
2. Room Rent	Rs. 100.00	Rs. 100.00	Rs. 100.00
3. Tuition Fees @	Rs. 100.00	Rs. 100.00	Rs. 100.00
4. Books & Games	Rs. 200.00	Rs. 250.00	Rs. 250.00
5. Student Welfare activity Fee	Rs. 50.00	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Rs. 750.00</b>	<b>Rs. 450.00</b>	<b>Rs. 450.00</b>

\* This will be adjusted against mess dues for March and April of next academic year.  
# This is in addition to the sum of Rs. 800/- already collected with the acceptance of admission offer.

**LAST BUT NOT THE LEAST** Many of my classmates, as also from the earlier and later batches, including myself, found their soulmates from batchmates or friends at campus visiting during socials, annual function - choosing to become life partners. What could be the better place than this, which laid the foundation of couple's future life? No wonder they say that marriages are made in heaven.

Friends these are the sweet memories we cherish and remember every day. Our batch still is a very close knit group having continuous interactions and regular annual milans. The bonds formed during those two years are unbreakable. Those were the days and IIMA was considered one of the best management institute not only in India but throughout the world and it still has retained its top position.

No wonder, I pray to God that if he is granting me a wish it should be to give back my two golden years at IIMA campus.

*Acknowledgement - I sincerely wish to thank our batchmate Mr. Kishen Pajethaya for his valuable contribution of old records exhibited in this article.*

# EMOTIONAL WELLNESS AT IIMA

## 1TO1HELP & GOVERNING BOARD FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES INTRODUCED

*The wellness services at the Institute are supported by the PGP 2008 batch in memory of their batch mate and friend Vivek Gupta who passed away in a tragic accident. Good emotional health being crucial for the overall wellbeing for any individual, such efforts are imperative to inspire self-care, adapt to stress and cope effectively with life.*

The institute has, following up on the recommendations of a Task Force on Psychological Well-being and support services at IIMA, engaged the services of 1to1help for a program on emotional wellness services. This program will assist and support staff, students, and faculty at IIMA in addressing their emotional wellness needs through professional counselling services provided via various modes, as well as through webinars to create awareness about topics related to emotional health and wellness.

### The resources/services that will be provided are:

**COUNSELLING:** Phone/Video/Chat/e-Counselling (8 am to 8 pm), 24X7 emergency support (monitoring and interventions for risk), face to face counselling and on request, counsellor support in Ahmedabad.

**DIGITAL CONTENT:** Audio/video resources, self-help articles, access through web portal/digital app.

**ASSESSMENTS:** Situation based assessments, Emotional Quotient assessment, recommendations and risk tagging based on assessments.

**GROUP INTERVENTIONS:** Webinars, talk by experts and suicide prevention protocol

**AWARENESS RESOURCES AND LAUNCH OF SERVICE:** Launch collaterals, LIVE Training/Awareness sessions

**SERVICE PROVIDER IS TO DEPLOY AN AFFILIATE COUNSELLOR,** with 5 years+ experience, based out of Ahmedabad to handle counselling requirements for IIMA locally, to complement the counselling services currently being provided at the institute, on a need basis.

In order to facilitate the onboarding of 1to1help into the IIMA ecosystem, to coordinate with the student community and to complement the activities of the counsellor on campus, a *Governing Board for Mental Health Services* has been set up. The Chair of the Board is Prof. Rakesh Basant. The other member of the Board is Ms. Radhika Bahadur (PGP 2008) who has extensive experience in the field of Health & Wellness.



# PROF. KAMLA CHOWDHRY (1920 - 2006)

*Dec 17th, 2020 was marked as the 100th birth anniversary of Prof. Kamla Chowdhry, the first faculty member of IIMA, pioneering management educationist and institution builder*



*1st Batch PGP 1964-66 students Dilnavaz Sidhwa (on the left) and Harsha Rawal (on the right) with Prof. Kamla Chowdhry (in the centre)*



*Dr. Kamla Chowdhry*

In her life, she was associated with ATIRA, IIMA, Ford Foundation India, IRMA, CSE, SEWA, and a variety of other institution building efforts. Dorm-1 in IIMA is named after her and the 'Kamala Cafe' in Ahmedabad, run by SEWA, is also named in her honour!

Over the past two years, the archives team has dug out various documents, pictures, and reflections about her life. On her birth centenary, IIMA Archives team and IIMA Communications team released a short film

on her life titled 'The First Faculty Member of IIMA: Dr. Kamla Chowdhry (1920-2006)' and a photo album.

Prof. Chinmay Tumbe also paid a poignant tribute to Prof. Kamla Chowdhry on the centenary through his essay titled 'Kamla' that was published at [fiftytwo.in](http://fiftytwo.in).

IIMA Archives Monthly Snippets can be accessed at [archives.iima.ac.in/snippets](http://archives.iima.ac.in/snippets)



*IIMA Foundation ceremony in the 1960s*



*Dr. Kamla Chowdhry and Dr. Douglas Enslinger (Ford Foundation)*



*Seventh Convocation - April 15, 1972*



*Dr. Kamla Chowdhry during the first convocation ceremony, 1966*



*From Left to Right: Dr. Douglas Ensminger (Ford Foundation), Harsha Rawal, Dilnavaz Sidhwa, Dr. Kamla Chowdhry and Prakash Tandon (IIMA Board Chairman)*

Programme for Management Development 1964  
Rambagh Palace, JAIPUR  
Middle Management Course  
11-1-64 19-2-64



*The first management development programme in Jaipur, 1964*



*First year MBA Committee in session - (Prof. Warren Haynes in the Chair) with Dr. Kamla Chowdhry seated on the right.*



*Twenty-third Convocation (April 04, 1988): Dr. Kamla Chowdhry received an honorary doctorate from IIMA*

# THE INSTITUTE'S TOP 25 WORKING PAPERS: OCTOBER 2020

Rank	Working Paper	File Downloads				Abstract Views			
		2020 01	3 months	12 months	Total	2020 01	3 months	12 months	Total
1	Pandemics and Historical Mortality in India <i>Chinmay Tumbe</i>	123	123	123	123	28	28	28	28
2	Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in Indian Railways: Models, Framework, and Policies <i>K. Sitharamaraju, Santhosh Kumar Beerelli, Saket Anil Yelne and Sundaravalli Narayanaswami</i>	13	13	13	13	7	7	7	7
3	Determinants of Disagreement: Learning from Indian Inflation Expectations Survey of Households <i>Gaurav Kumar Singh and Tathagata Bandyopadhyay</i>	9	9	9	9	4	4	4	4
4	Farmer Producer Organizations as Farmer Collectives: A Case Study from India <i>Nalini Bikkina, Rama Mohana Turaga and Vaibhav Bhamariya</i>	8	31	113	334	25	88	409	1,056
4	A THEORY OF TAX EVASION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES <i>Errol D'Souza</i>	8	25	103	245	36	103	397	798
4	Theory of Planned Behaviour Approach to Understand the Purchasing Behaviour for Environmentally Sustainable Products <i>Bipul Kumar</i>	8	16	61	260	27	51	270	1,019
4	Expectations formation of household inflation expectations in India <i>Gaurav Kumar Singh</i>	8	11	11	11	8	14	14	14
8	Enhancing Port Performance: A Case of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust <i>Aman Rathi, Ambesh Pratap Singh and Sundaravalli Narayanaswami</i>	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6
9	Diversity and Inclusion at the Workplace: A Review of Research and Perspectives <i>Nisha Nair and Neharika Vohra</i>	6	17	45	105	11	43	151	333
9	Food Subsidy in India: Trends, Causes and Policy Reform Options <i>Vijay Paul Sharma</i>	6	16	76	1,038	92	259	1,185	11,884
11	High-Value Agriculture in India: Past Trends and Future Prospects <i>Vijay Paul Sharma and Dinesh Jain</i>	5	13	52	204	58	150	582	2,070

11	Board Interlocks and Their Impact on Corporate Governance: The Indian Experience - Coping with Corporate Cholesterol <b>Bala N. Balasubramanian, Samir K. Barua, Suresh Bhagavatula and Rejje George</b>	5	12	21	86	10	25	60	299
13	A Framework of Project Risk Management for the Underground Corridor Construction of Metro Rail <b>Sarkar Debasis and Goutam Dutta</b>	4	12	58	335	17	44	217	1,135
13	Fertilizer Subsidy in India: Who are the Beneficiaries? <b>Vijay Paul Sharma and Hrima Thaker</b>	4	19	67	1,230	133	370	1,248	11,124
15	Recommendations of the Task Force on Revival of the Co-operative Credit Structure: Implementation Issues <b>Mankal Sriram</b>	3	11	28	164	72	257	556	2,135
15	Financing Infrastructure in India – Issues and the Way Forward <b>Sebastian Morris</b>	3	8	38	119	23	48	193	410
15	Marketing of Fruits and Vegetables in India: A Study Covering the Ahmedabad, Chennai and Kolkata Markets <b>Vasant P. Gandhi and Namboodiri N V</b>	3	5	36	329	13	49	328	3,901
15	Using Transaction Utility Approach for Retail Format Decision <b>Piyush Kumar Sinha</b>	3	4	16	135	36	97	237	1,431
15	Changing Context of Trade Mark Protection in India: A Review of the Trade Marks Act, 1999 <b>Akhileshwar Pathak</b>	3	4	6	13	8	10	16	53
15	DSS (Decision Support Systems) in Indian Organised Retail Sector <b>Preeta Vyas and Sharma Ankush</b>	3	8	15	183	15	45	138	1,145
15	Party Autonomy in International Commercial Arbitration <b>Anurag K. Agarwal</b>	3	9	70	507	18	66	374	2,453
15	Dismantling Fertilizer Subsidies in India: Some Issues and Concerns for Farm Sector Growth <b>Vijay Paul Sharma</b>	3	4	11	216	8	39	110	1,333
23	Ethics in Organizations: The Case of Tata Steel <b>Ganesh M P and Sunil Kumar Maheshwari</b>	2	3	9	109	20	27	97	914
23	Pre-packs in the Indian Insolvency Regime <b>M.P. Ram Mohan and Vishakha Raj</b>	2	2	8	8	3	4	23	23
23	Mega projects in India Environmental and Land Acquisition Issues in the Road Sector <b>G. Raghuram, Samantha Bastian and Satyam Shivam Sundaram</b>	2	2	7	136	3	8	34	808

Statistics updated 2021-02-03



# CENTRE FOR TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS INAUGURATED



The Centre for Transportation and Logistics was inaugurated on January 29, 2021 in the presence of Prof Errol D’Souza (Director, IIMA) and Prof. Tathagata Bandyopadhyay (Dean - Faculty, IIMA). The occasion also witnessed a panel discussion on the topic “Trends and Innovations in Transportation and Logistics” with distinguished speakers from the industry, moderated by Prof Debjit Roy and Prof Sandip Chakrabarti (Co-Chairpersons, CTL).

The IIMA Centre for Transportation and Logistics

(CTL) will address critical passenger and freight transportation, and logistics challenges in India through an integrated, multidisciplinary program of research, post-graduate and executive education, technology transfer, and policy advice for enhancing the mobility of people and goods. The objective of the CTL is to contribute to improving the efficiency of multi-modal transportation systems and supply chain logistics, thereby promoting economic growth and fostering sustainable development.



# KRISHI MANTHAN, IIMA'S FOOD AND AGRIBUSINESS SUMMIT GOES VIRTUAL

By Team Krishi Manthan 2020

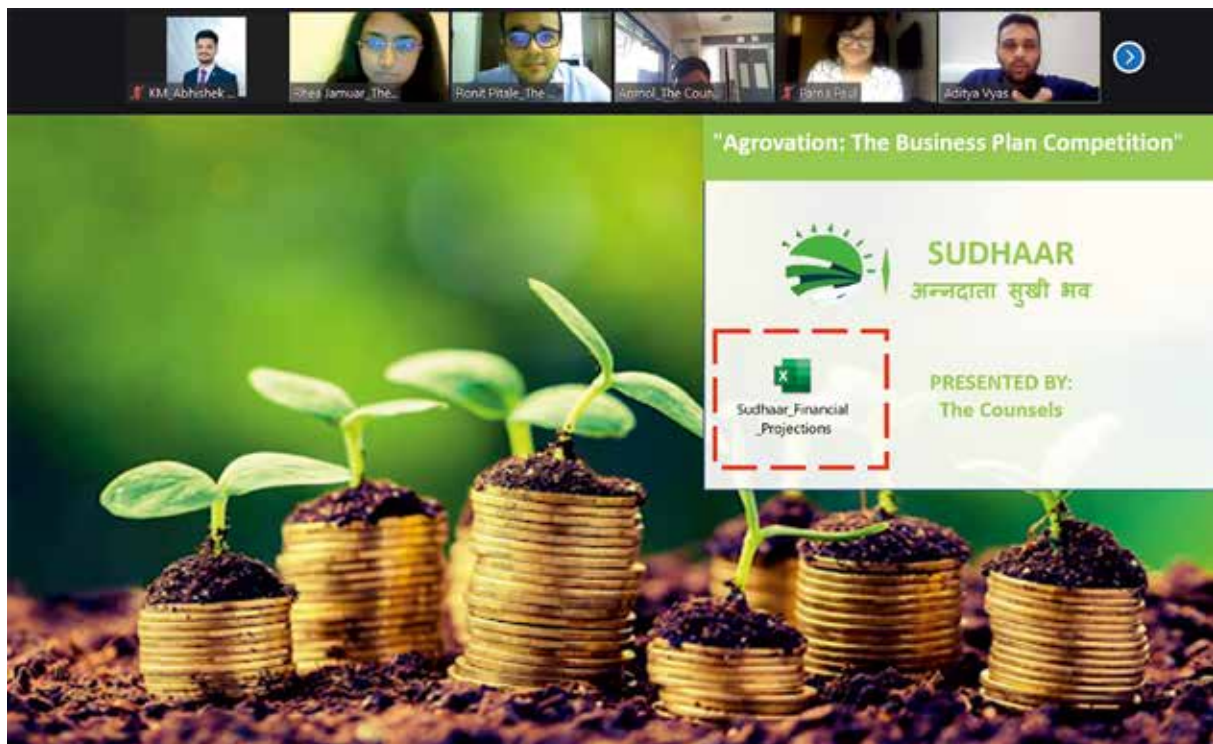
**K**rishi Manthan, the annual Food and Agri summit at Indian Institute of Ahmedabad, was organized successfully on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020. One of the largest of its kind, the conclave, previously known as Amaethon, has a strong legacy of over 15 years.

Conducted in an entirely virtual mode due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the summit hosted more than **2100** participants **from 310 colleges** worldwide. The conclave puts together an incredible line up of two speaker sessions, six workshops, nine events, and a panel discussion. The organizing team consisted of 30 students from PGP - Food & Agribusiness Management Programme, working under the guidance of Prof. Vasant Gandhi (Faculty Advisor, Krishi Manthan 2020) and Prof. Satish Deodhar (Chairperson, PGP-FABM

Programme).

**Speakers - Krishi Manthan 2020** The Summit boasted of pioneers in the Agriculture sector as prominent speakers, who provided the participants with their valuable insights, like Dr. Vijay Paul Sharma (Chairman - Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices, Ministry of Agriculture), Dr. Anil Gupta (IIMA Professor and Padma Shri Awardee), Dr. Harsh Kumar Bhanwala (Director CIFL & Ex. Chairman NABARD), Mr. Arijit Guha Mazumder (R&D Director, Mondelez International), Mr. Kamlesh Kumar Sharma (Chief Public Affairs & Communication Officer, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Limited), to name a few.

**Workshops - Krishi Manthan 2020** With over 1500 registrations, the virtually conducted workshops



Krishi Manthan's "Agrovation" is an agri-innovation competition



Panel discussion on “Opportunities and Implementation challenges in recent Farm Bill reforms”

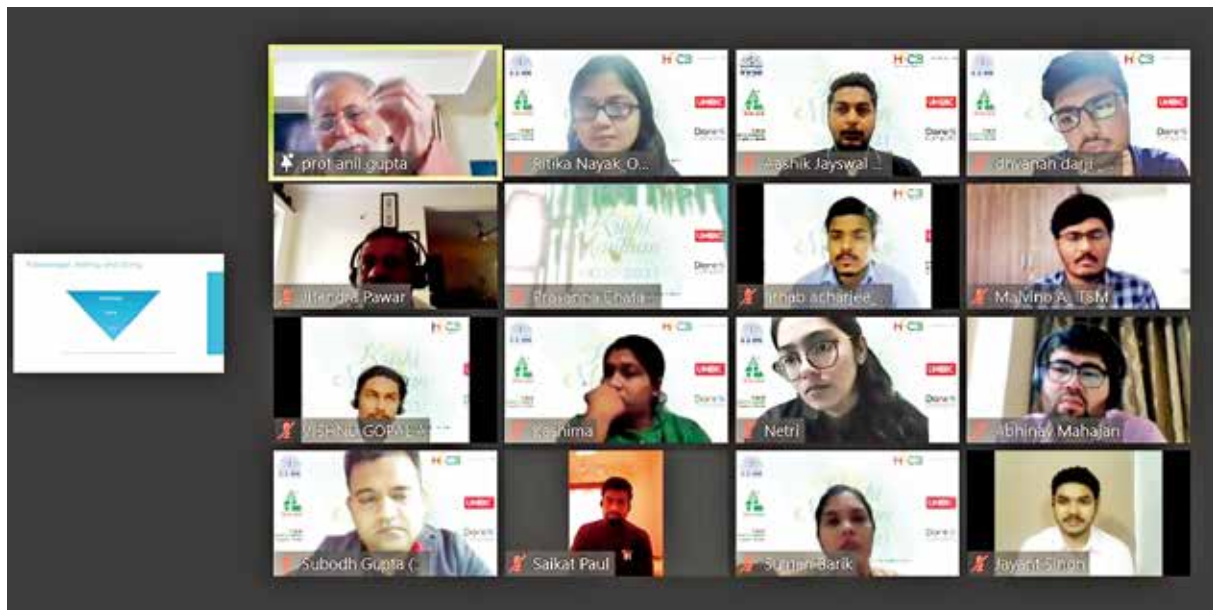
provided the attendees with an experience of the real-time business scenario with unexpected problems and opportunities for the young business enthusiasts to learn from the able guidance of Innovation leaders and Corporate Giants. Some noteworthy workshops were “Inclusive Grassroot Innovations and Agri-Entrepreneurship,” “Fundamentals of Rural Finance and Financial Inclusion,” “New approaches in sales and distribution of Food products and Beverages,” “Blockchain and IoT applications in Agri & Food,”



Workshop on “Market Research for Food & Agri Products” by Mr. Prabhakar Tiwari (Angel Broking)



Workshop on “New approaches in sales & distribution of Food Products & Beverages” by Mr. Kamlesh Kumar Sharma, HCCB



Workshop on “Inclusive Grassroot Innovations & Agri Entrepreneurship” by Prof. Anil Gupta



The Team behind Krishi Manthan, December 26th-27th, 2020

“Market Research for Food & Agri Products and “Fundamentals of Commodity Trading and its applications in the futures market.”

**Events & Competitions- Krishi Manthan 2020** The events and competitions, both informal and formal, hosted some of the country’s best minds who competed to prove their mettle. The events gave the competitors a challenge for every domain from strategy,

advertisements and marketing, case studies, and business plans. With a participation of over **1100 for the informal events**, more than **3500 for the formal events**, and a prize money pool of **INR 3,00,000**, the events tested the participants’ strategic thinking, problem-solving, and management skills to bring out their Innovative Entrepreneurial spirit.

# PROF ANIRBAN BANERJEE JOINS FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING AREA

We are glad to inform that Prof. Anirban Banerjee has joined the Institute on March 22, 2021 as Assistant Professor in the Finance and Accounting area of the Institute.

Before joining IIMA, Prof. Banerjee was working as Assistant Professor at the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode.

Prof. Banerjee has completed the Doctoral Program in Finance & Control Group from the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta in 2019. He



earned his B.E. (Electrical Engineering) from Jadavpur University in 2009.

Prof. Banerjee’s primary research interests include Impact of Algorithmic Trading in Financial Markets, Market Microstructure and Derivative Markets.

His office is in Dorm 14 Faculty Office-26 . He can be reached on extension 7426 or at [anirbanb@iima.ac.in](mailto:anirbanb@iima.ac.in).

## PROF. ANUJ KAPOOR JOINED MARKETING AREA

**W**e are glad to inform that Prof. Anuj Kapoor joined the Institute on March 09, 2020 as Assistant Professor in the Marketing area of the Institute.

Prof. Kapoor has received his doctoral degree in Business Administration (Quantitative Marketing and Economics) from University of Utah, USA in 2018. He earned his Master's degree in International Business from Panjab University in 2013. He is also a B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering from University Institute of Engineering and Technology, Kurukshetra University.

Prof. Kapoor's primary research interests include Marketing Analytics, Economics of Digitization, Digital Experimentation, Digital Marketing and Analytics Machine Learning, Causal Inference and Algorithmic Fairness.

His office is in Wing no. 13D. He can be reached on extension 4924 or at [anujk@iima.ac.in](mailto:anujk@iima.ac.in).



## PROF. MAYANK VARSHNEY JOINS STRATEGY AREA

**W**e are happy to inform that Prof. Mayank Varshney has joined the Institute on Jan 4, 2021 as Assistant Professor in the Strategy area of the Institute.

Prof. Varshney has received his doctoral degree in Strategy and Policy from the National University of Singapore in 2020. He earned his Post Graduate Diploma in Management (equivalent to MBA) from Management Development Institute, Gurgaon in 2013 and earned his B.Tech in Information Technology from GGSIP University, University School of Information Technology, Delhi in 2011.

Prof. Varshney's primary research interests include Employee mobility, Foundations of Firm Technology Management, and Organizational Learning.



His office is in Room no. 11 (First floor) at IIMA New campus. His email is [mayankv@iima.ac.in](mailto:mayankv@iima.ac.in) and he can be contacted on extension 4411.

## PROF. PRASHANT DAS JOINS FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING AREA

We are happy to inform you that Prof. Prashant Das has joined the Institute on Jan 27, 2021 as Associate Professor in the Finance and Accounting area of the Institute.

Before joining IIMA, Prof. Das was working as Associate Professor of Real Estate Finance and the acting Director of the Real Estate, Finance, and Economics (REFE) Institute at EHL Lausanne, Switzerland.

Prof. Das has received his doctoral degree in Business/Real Estate from Georgia State University,



USA in 2013. He earned his Master's degree in Land Development from Texas A&M University, USA in 2008. He earned his Bachelor of Architecture from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee in 2005.

Prof. Das's primary research interests include Commercial Real Estate (Stocks, Bonds, Real Estate Investment Trusts, CMBS, Hedonic Valuation, Finance, Investment, Sustainability, Hotels) and Residential Real Estate in India.

His office is in KLMD Room No. 26. He can be reached on extension 4858 or at [prashantd@iima.ac.in](mailto:prashantd@iima.ac.in).

## PROF SRIRAM SANKARANARAYANAN JOINS P&QM AREA

We are happy to inform that Prof. Sriram Sankaranarayanan has joined the Institute on Dec 2, 2020 as Assistant Professor in the Production and Quantitative Methods (P&QM) area of the Institute.

Before joining IIMA, Prof. Sriram was a Post-doctoral fellow at the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Data Science for Real-Time Decision-Making at Polytechnique Montreal.

Prof. Sriram has received his doctoral degree in Civil Engineering (Center for Systems Science and Engineering) from the Johns Hopkins University in



2018. He earned his B.Tech (Honors) in Civil Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur in 2013.

Prof. Sriram's primary research interests include developing algorithms to solve non-convex game-theoretic and optimization problems using polyhedral and convexity theory; bilevel programming and complementarity problems with applications in the field of energy. His office is in Room no. 11 (First floor) at IIMA New campus. His email

is [srirams@iima.ac.in](mailto:srirams@iima.ac.in) and he may be reached on extension 4411.

## IIMA TO STUDY AND DEVELOP AN APPROPRIATE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE FOR THE CAPITAL

A team lead by Professor Sundaravalli Narayanaswami will carry out this study.

GNCTD, based on the Delhi High Court judgment in response to a writ petition, has engaged IIM-A to study and advocate an appropriate administrative structure for Delhi. The detailed study will investigate

the public services offered, the quality of services offered, the citizen's aspirations, and the existing gap in administering the services. The committee to suggest ways in promoting a citizen-centric approach in Delhi has commissioned a region-specific online survey to gauge the citizen perspectives through a dedicated portal <https://gnctd.iima.ac.in>.

## HON'BLE FINANCE MINISTER, SMT. NIRMALA SITHARAMAN ON INDIAN ECONOMY



Prof. Errol D'Souza welcomed Hon'ble Minister of Finance, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman for an interactive session hosted by JSW School of Public Policy on 25th February 2021. In a candid conversation

with students, Ms. Sonakshi Agrawal (MBA-FABM 2022) and Mr. Arunabh Saxena (MBA 2021), the discussion was focused on 'The Economic Rebound and the Indian Economy in 2021 and Beyond'.

# MAKAR SAKRANTI, PONGAL, AND UTTARAYAN - CELEBRATIONS 2021

Event organised by CultComm, - The Cultural Committee of IIMA

Photo credits: Perspectives - The Photography Club of IIM-A



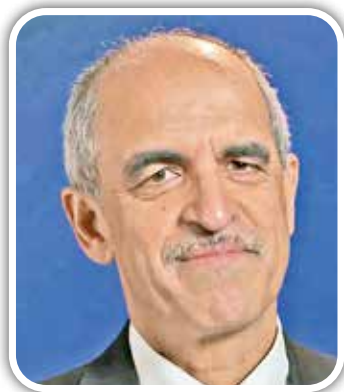
**C**elebrating the festivals in ethnic wear and masks, the day brought with it some respite, a lot of cheer and a strong sense of community - after a long time.

A Kite Flying event was also organised at LKP Lawn, Cricket Ground and CR Lawns with a special

festive breakfast menu being served in the Mess.

The yearly tradition on Pongal also continued this year with authentic Tamil dishes being served on banana leaves in the Students Mess. The WIMWIAN Tamil Fraternity, in association with MessComm and CultComm, kept the zeal high for Pongal celebrations.





## DR SRIKANT DATAR

**(PGP 1978)**

**PADMA SHRI 2021 - LITERATURE AND EDUCATION**

**GEORGE F. BAKER PROFESSOR OF ADMINISTRATION  
AND DEAN OF THE FACULTY, HARVARD BUSINESS  
SCHOOL**

**M**r Srikant Datar, who became the 11th dean of Harvard Business School on 1st January 2021 is one of the recipients of the Padma Awards in 2021. He has been facilitated with the Padma

Shri, the fourth highest civilian award in India. He is renowned as an innovative educator, a distinguished scholar, and a deeply experienced academic leader.



## MS SNIGDHA SINGH

**(PGP 2002)**

**THE 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN EUROPEAN  
FINANCE 2020**

**CO-HEAD, EMEA FICC TRADING AND HEAD OF EMEA  
RATESTRADING, BANK OF AMERICA**

**I**n May 2020, she was promoted to co-head of fixed income, currencies and commodities (FICC) trading for Europe, Middle East and Africa - in addition to her role overseeing rates trading in the region - and promoted to the bank's Emea executive committee. She has also been at the forefront of guiding Bank of America's trading operations through Covid related market disruption. Under her leadership, Bank of America's Emea FICC business has had one of its best quarters, while its Emea rates business is on course for one of its strongest years ever in 2020, with revenue

soaring by 100% in the year to July. In 2019, she played a lead role in implementing Bank of America's Brexit strategy by growing the firm's rates trading presence on the continent. She also leads the Inter-Bank Offered Rate (IBOR) transition programme for the firm's global markets business. A trained classical vocalist, Singh began her career as one of only a handful of women on the trading floor at Lehman Brothers. Following stints at Insight Investment and HSBC, she joined Bank of America's swaps desk five years ago and has been on an upward trajectory since.



## MR HARSHIT GUPTA

**(PGP-ABM 2014)**

**FORBES INDIA 30 UNDER 30 (2021), CATEGORY -**

**AGRITECH**

**CO-FOUNDER, GRAMOPHONE**

**W**ith a vision to transform agriculture in the country by maximising farmer's income, the Gramophone helps the farmers by providing farmers with timely information, technology and right kind of inputs to achieve better yields - making farming more efficient. The Gramophone app has a six-pronged approach to help farmers increase their productivity:

Input Planning, Support & Advisory, Quality, Availability, Convenience, and Cost-effectiveness. Besides providing input products, the platform also started connecting farmers to buyers since October 2020.

It is worthy to note that Gramophone was founded in 2016 by Mr Harshit Gupta, Mr Tauseef Ahmad Khan (PGP-ABM 2014), Mr Nishant Vats Mahatre (PGP-ABM 2014) and Mr Ashish Rajan Singh (IIT Madras).

Speaking to us on his association with Gramophone, the journey so far and the recent award, Mr Gupta

expressed, "Recognition and awards always motivates an individual; acts as a source of energy and inspiration to do well in coming future. Getting included in the prestigious Forbes 30 under 30 list has been one such pleasant experience and also representing agritech sector of India is a proud moment for me.

Having done post-graduation in agribusiness management and working in agri-input companies gave an opportunity to work with farmers, understand their pain points and building deep domain knowledge. The common desire to help the farmers of the country in maximising their income is what brought all four of us together and start Gramophone. It has been quite an eventful journey since then having been grown from farmer to farmer to a current base of 500000+ farmers. With a preventive approach to agriculture we have managed to reduce cost of cultivation by 20% for engaged farmers and also increased the production by more than 30% in most of the cases."



*MSH decorations from recycled and homemade ornaments and baubles... no cup, no box, no paper was spared in making this wonderfully unique Christmas tree.*

## LIGHTS ... DECOR AND SANTA'S GIFTS AT PGPX!!

*By Cultural Committee, PGPX 2020-21*



*Also...Dorm 35 tried to bring Christmas at fairyland alive!*

# MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL Can you recognize them all?

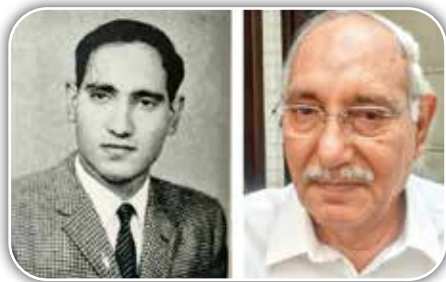
By Sharad Sharma (PGP 1971)



Amulya Charan



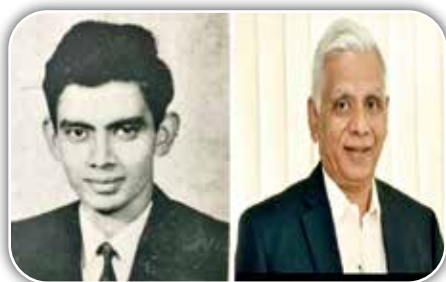
Harikishanlal Agarwal



Ramesh Anand



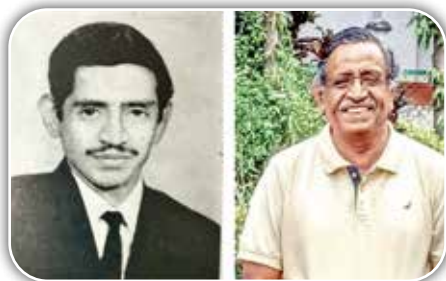
Jahar Bagchi



Pradeep Bhargav



Sankar Bhattacharya



M Chandrasekaran



Chanakya Balaram

# BATCH ACTIVITY

**D**uring my last trip to Ahmedabad, I visited the IIMA Campus to refresh my memories of the time I spent here and went to the dorm where I stayed during PGP 1969-71 graduation year. I was looking outside the JHAROKHA (the name given by our batch to the big circular windows in the dorm) with dreamy eyes trying to recollect and recreate my golden days.

Suddenly, I saw a reflection of a person looking at me and smiling. The image looked quite familiar! I was astonished; Oh my GOD, this was me, Sharad Sharma of 1971 with a thick black hair, a moustache and black plastic spectacles. The luminant figure started moving and continued with his routine activity while glancing smilingly in between at me.

I rubbed my eyes in disbelief and ran to the bathroom to look at myself in the mirror. Yes, the face in the mirror was familiar except for some wrinkles, white hair and stylish golden spectacles. I came out and looked around the rooms of my dorm-mates trying to recollect their faces and wondering as to how they must be looking now after 50 years.

This gave me an idea to plan and collect the

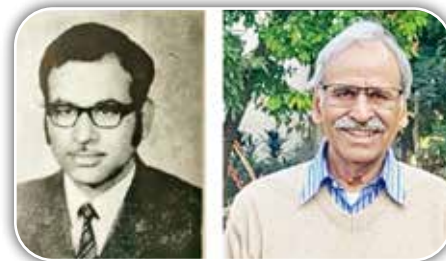
current pictures of my friends and compare them with how they looked in 1971. I started the ball rolling and my batchmates Kishen and Shekar helped in contacting everyone and collecting the pictures. My younger son Avichal helped me technically in compiling and arranging the photographs together of “then v/s now”. We feel that this album will be a beautiful remembrance preserved by us, our next generation and also in the archives of IIMA. As usual with any project, many difficulties were faced. Many friends sent pictures without caring for its size, sharpness etc. while others did not bother or were too lazy to make any efforts. Many of them were untraceable, while some of our dear friends had left for heavenly abode.

However, with collaborative efforts, we managed to collect 45 latest print-worthy pictures which could be compared with the 1971 pictures available from the JHAROKHA magazine, published by our batch.

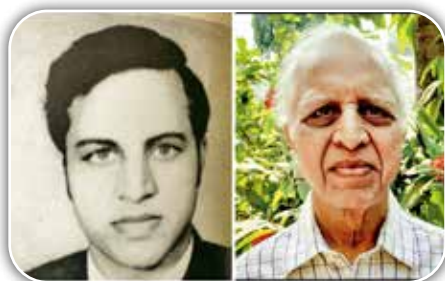
Looking at the final output i.e. the comparison between old and new, I wonder if the mirror on the wall would recognize the individuals who were here 50 years ago – will the mirror distinguish THEN AND NOW of the PGP 1969-71 batch.



Abhay Mehta



Ashok Sood



Pankaj Dave



Ravi Jain

# BATCH ACTIVITY



V Chandramohan



Bhuwan Chaturvedi



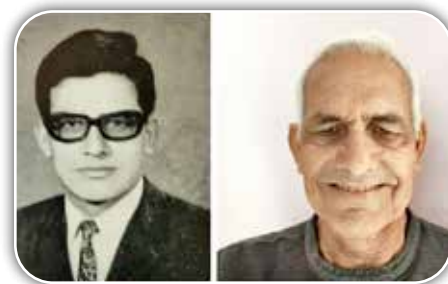
Aseem Das Gupta



Ranjeet Singh Dugar



S L Ganpathy Subramaniam



Kailash Gupta



V Harihara Subramanian



K K Havaldar

# BATCH ACTIVITY



Shantikam Hazarika



H R Jairam



Ratan Karanjia



V M Kulkarni



P V Lakshmiopathy



Hari Mundra



Khurshid Patell



Kishen Pejathaya

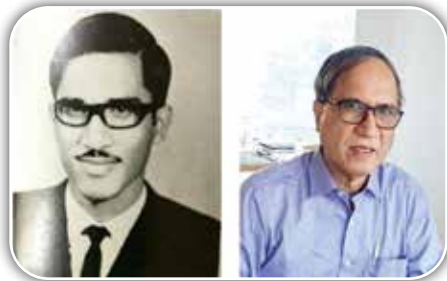
# BATCH ACTIVITY



M Raghunandan



Raja Ramanathan



Aubrey Rebello



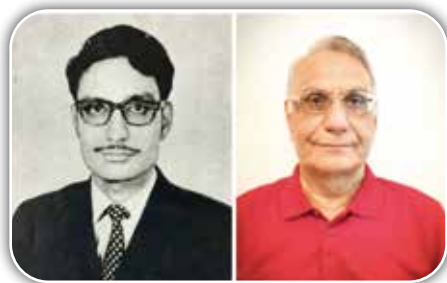
Paramjit Singh Sachdeva



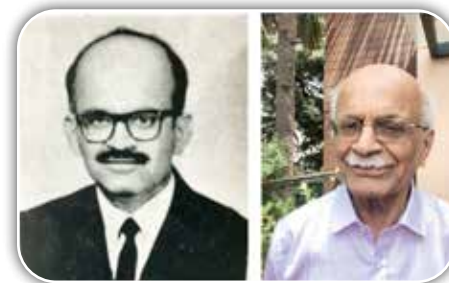
Amol Sandil



Vishwas Shevde



Sharad Sharma

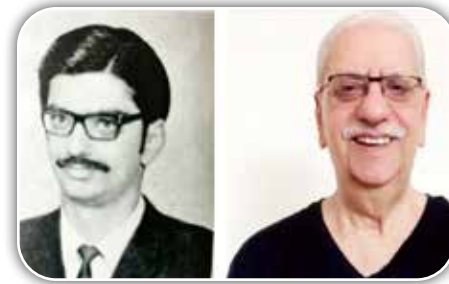


M P V Shenoi

# BATCH ACTIVITY



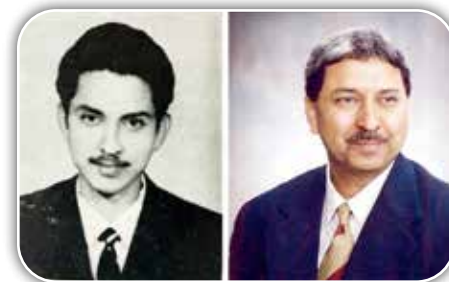
Janardhan Shukla



Murli Tekchandani



Vikram Tyagi



Anant Upadhyaya



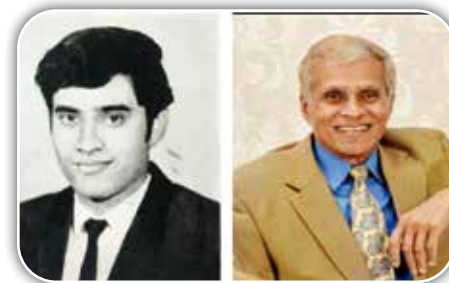
K Vaidyanathan



Vaman K Kamath



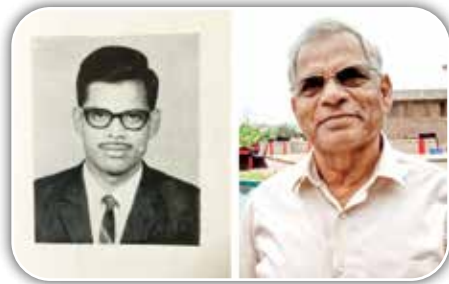
Vinod Dhawan



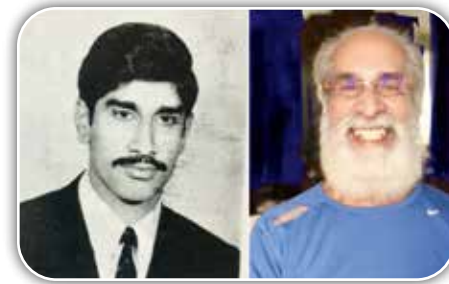
G Vishwabharthi



# BATCH ACTIVITY



Md. Yusha



P S Viswanathan



Ramakrishnan



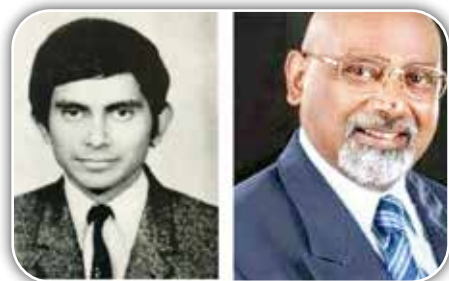
V S Vikram



Bhaskar Vibhakar



Raju Jacob



Sudhir Andrews



Kishore Chaukar

# PGP 1990: 30<sup>th</sup> YEAR VIRTUAL REUNION

*Contributed by Mr P V Sreenath (Batch Coordinator)*

The PGP'90 batch had its 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion on Dec 12 & 13, 2020. The dates were decided nearly a year in advance to allow batch mates to plan their travel to Ahmedabad well in advance... but, as they say, the best laid out plans of mice and men often go awry. With Covid-19 hitting the world, we waited patiently for the pandemic to go away to enable the Reunion to be held as planned. Towards the end of October, we finally decided that the options available to us were to either postpone the Physical Reunion or to have the Reunion in an Online format. With Covid-19 showing no signs of abating and uncertainty about if & when we would be able to have a Physical Reunion, the Organizing Team decided to go ahead with an Online Reunion.



Thus began a journey which ultimately resulted in a Reunion with 142 batch mates, constituting 80% of the Batch, participating – the highest ever participation in a Batch Reunion. The 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Reunions on campus had seen around 70-80 batch mates participate, so Covid19 actually facilitated many more people to participate in the Online Reunion than would have been possible otherwise! For many in the batch, who had not attended the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Reunions, the 30<sup>th</sup> Online Reunion provided them an opportunity to attend and connect with the batch after 30 long years.

The Inaugural Session saw the Director and Dean join online and interact with the batch about the plans of the Institute and how we as alumni could give back to the Institute. It was interesting to see that the Institute wanted us alumni to give back in terms of time and

efforts – whether it be in teaching, case writing or some other form. With the Endowment Fund at IIMA taking shape, our batch has taken the initiative to be the 1<sup>st</sup> Batch to contribute to the IIMA Endowment Fund, with batch contributions already underway.

The key part of a Batch Reunion is the opportunity to reconnect, meet & interact with batch mates.



Hence, one of the challenges of an Online Reunion was to ensure that we were able to do this – the Reunion thus had multiple sessions for online interactions amongst batch mates – some interactions section-wise, some in which all participated, a theme-based experience sharing session as well as some free-flowing unstructured interactions. There was also a Batch Trivia Quiz which triggered nostalgia and laughs. At past Reunions on campus, there have been instances of some people failing to recognize fellow batch mates; however, there has never been a case where someone has been unable to recognize himself or herself!! Well, this happened in the Face Mashups segment during the Reunion Quiz, in which **Saurabh and Ghoshi** failed to recognize themselves from their Yearbook pics from 30 years earlier, although one must concede that the faces were mashed up!!

There was an air of poignancy at the Memorial Session for Departed Batch mates. With 10 of our good friends no more, it was a session which touched many hearts and brought back memories of these wonderful souls. Being an Online Reunion, we invited the families of departed batch mates to join us live

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for this session – spouses, kids, brothers and even some mothers of departed batch mates joined online and the families were touched that they had been invited to participate. The families saw & heard the touching tributes paid to their loved ones by fellow batch mates and also shared their thoughts on the occasion.

30 years since campus and some of those who taught us are no more, some are no more in Ahmedabad and some have aged & unable to attend a Reunion at Ahmedabad. The Online Reunion provided an opportunity for a large number of faculty to attend and we are truly honoured that 17 faculty members who taught us attended the Online Reunion from the comfort of their homes. While responding to the invitation to join the Online Faculty Tribute Session, Prof AK Jain, in his inimitable style, wrote “I will try to join early otherwise you and your batch mates may not allow me to join the session, which is what I used to do when you were around!” And, true to their sense of enthusiasm, love and affection for us, all the faculty members joined online ahead of the scheduled time.



**Amit Gupta's** wife Gauri, an accomplished stage director, gladly agreed to direct an Online Play for the Reunion, with batch mates as actors, based on an IIMA theme. So, in a tribute to Prof SP Singh and his highly popular SFI course on campus, was born the play titled ‘Love in the Times of SFI’ – the play starred **Hari & Shefali**, with Amit in an ‘unfriendly appearance’. Seeing Shefali’s Singapore Dollars change to US Dollars as it changed hands online to Hari (based in the US) during the play highlighted how easy ‘online money laundering’ has become these days!!

In the spirit of trying to embrace events suitable to an Online Format, we had an Online Bridge Tournament in the days leading to the Reunion, which saw bridge enthusiasts participate actively in bridge sessions on an online platform managed by .... yes, you guessed it right .... managed by yet another IIMA alumnus Sukrit. **Saurabh and Parag** took the lead in organizing this tournament, which had participants from the US to India & China.

Then, of course, our own batchmate and Yoga Guru **Achal** taught us the importance of being fit in mind and body through a session on Yoga, which was attended by many family members too.



It was hilarious & wonderful to watch the faculty pulling each other’s legs and having their own mini-Reunion before the formal Faculty Session commenced. Many of them were seeing each other after many years, so the 30<sup>th</sup> Batch Reunion served as a Faculty Reunion too for many of the faculty. Prof TV Rao fondly remembered his term as PGP Chair when we joined and requested that batch mates share their specific experiences for the benefit of the batches to come. At the end of the Faculty Tribute Session, several faculty members were so touched that they expressed a desire to join the batch for the rest of the Reunion and actually did so, joining the batch for the online sessions that followed.

The batch is indeed fortunate to have had a professional stage director direct an Online Play at the Reunion – as with most other events during the 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion, we didn’t have to do look far – talent seems to be in abundance in the batch and families.



In what was possibly one of the highlights of the Reunion, Harsha Bhogle, one of IIMA’s most famous and popular alumni, was interviewed by two IIMA Team cricketers from our batch, **Satish Shankar** and **Prasan Kumar**. Harsha was at his candid best, on topics ranging from his cricketing career to becoming

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the most admired cricket commentator in the world and also shared his views on various aspects of cricket, cricketing formats and cricketers.



It was indeed a frank and fascinating interview which was appreciated by all – an interview conducted during the Indian cricket team’s recent tour of Australia.

The Reunion had an interesting talk by another IIMA alumnus Prakash Iyer on a topic of great relevance ‘Transitioning to an Alternate Career’. Many of Prakash’s thoughts resonated with our batch mates at a time when many are contemplating retirement and looking at meaningful & satisfying options to pursue

The only external performance at the Reunion was a stand-up comedy performance by Jeeveshu Ahluwalia, who is one of those who has himself transitioned to an alternate career as a standup comedian after a corporate career in well-known multinationals.

Music and Bollywood music is something that always strengthens bonds. We had 2 wonderful music sessions during the Reunion – one in the Inaugural Session and one in the Concluding Session of the 2-Day Reunion. In the Inaugural Session, Rachit Bhatia, the son of our batchmate **Rajesh Bhatia** and a professional performer in New Zealand these days, regaled the online audience with his wonderful selection & rendition of songs.



It was indeed a happy coincidence that the 30<sup>th</sup> Batch Reunion was also Rachit’s 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion with his

dad’s batch mates – Rachit, as a toddler, had attended the batch convocation way back in 1990 and it was only fitting that, after 30 years, he performed at the 30<sup>th</sup> Batch Reunion!

The Reunion ended on a high note with a spirited musical evening by the talented and versatile singers and musicians of the batch and family members. The evening never seemed to end with request after request by batch mates being honoured in great style by the musical family of the batch - the family comprising **Pushkar, Apurvi, Balaji, Venky, Anupam Pandey, Hari, Revathi, Anil Sharma, Shekhar, Gandhi, Dongre, Ramu’s** wife Radha, **DP’s** wife/daughter Rashmi/ Inakshi and Balaji’s daughter Nikita. While one missed out on hearing **Prasad** the flutist, Prasad the Music Producer played a key role in making the musical evening a memorable one.



The musical evening was a fitting end to a unique Online Reunion which saw record participation by batch mates and brought back nostalgic memories of the wonderful days spent together on campus. Thanks to **Balaji, Ghoshi, Srinivasaraghavan, Hari and Amit**, the comperes who did a fabulous job of stringing the various parts of the Reunion together and making it an event to remember.

# PLANNING AND ORGANIZING AN ONLINE ALUMNI REUNION

By P V Sreenath (PGP 1990)

The PGP Batch of 1988-90 organized its 30<sup>th</sup> Batch Reunion as a completely Online Reunion on Dec 12/13, 2020. It was a grand success with nearly 80% of the batch participating in the Reunion from across the globe. Planning and organizing an Online Reunion can be daunting, since we will need to consider various factors which may not be relevant in a Physical Reunion on campus or elsewhere. So, how did we go about it, what are the issues to consider and what have been our learnings?

## WHEN TO HAVE THE REUNION

- **Time of the Year:** Given that most batches would have batchmates spread across the world, deciding on a date suitable to all is difficult. Having said that, it is still important to recognize that dates around a holiday season are best avoided (even in Covid times!), as people may have other plans with their near & dear ones for that time. It is best to avoid the periods around Dussehra & Diwali in India, as also Thanksgiving and Christmas/New Year in the Western World. While that does limit the window of opportunity, it is also easier to work with a limited set of dates and try to finalize, rather than try to work out a batch consensus with open date options. We decided that the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas works best.

- **Set the Dates:** Once the time of the year is fixed, work out a suitable weekend. In our case, we decided the dates for Dec 2020 well in advance, in Jan 2020 itself. This was done with a view to allow people to plan their holiday & travel schedules well ahead. When Covid-19 happened, we initially decided to wait it out to see if it would pass; but, sometime in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of Oct 2020, we felt it was time to take a call. Not wanting to cancel or postpone our 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion, given people were looking forward to the event, we took the call to do it as an Online Reunion.

- **Timezone Planning:** The challenge in an Online Reunion is to manage the Reunion Timings such

that a) all get to participate in at least some parts of the Reunion and b) most get to participate in most parts of the Reunion. All should feel included and an Online Reunion based on just one geography's timezone preferences (e.g. India) will be a challenge to sell to the batch. Based on this criteria alone, the traditional way of a Reunion on IIMA campus (over 2 full days) needed a rethink, when we started planning our Reunion.

- **Duration and Timings of the Reunion:** A reunion held on campus typically stretches from a Friday evening to Sunday evening, with everyone on campus and able to interact at the same location. In an Online Reunion, without physical interactions, keeping people engaged for the full day can be a challenge. So, we decided, fairly on in the planning process, that we will split each day of the 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion into 2 sessions each, one in the morning IST and one in the evening IST, of approximately 3 – 4 hours each session ... with a total of 4 such sessions across 2 days .... for a Reunion comprising a total of 14 hours or so over 2 days. This was most appropriate for us as a batch, given we had around >50% of the batch in India, 20-25% or so in the US, 10-12% in Singapore and the rest spread out across various parts of the world

## ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING

- **Constitution of Reunion Planning/ Organizing Team:** Getting the right team together is possibly the most crucial task. Getting a team which is passionate about the Reunion and is able to work cohesively is key. Also, you need to ensure that people with different talents come together. This is what made our Online Reunion so successful.

o **Gender Balance:** While we all know the gender balance at IIMA has improved a lot, it was not so during our time, when we had fewer than 15 ladies in the batch. The thinking that lady/ies can bring to a planning team are invaluable and, I can say, with confidence, that the Reunion shaped up the way it did in great measure on account of the ladies on the team.

- **Geographical Diversity:** Make sure that various geographies are represented in the planning process, so that unique aspects of each geography are factored in

- **Organizational Capabilities:** you need people who can plan and execute ... hence, a team with a combination of people with ideas and execution capabilities

**Event Management:** All of us are busy with our own lives ... while it is definitely possible to organize a Reunion independently, an Event Management Agency adds a lot of value and takes burden off the shoulders of the organizing team. For an Online Reunion, we looked for an agency which had prior experience with Online Events, even if not specific experience with Online Reunions.

Platforms like Zoom have gained in popularity these days, especially in Covid times ... however, there are limitations in all these platforms to accommodate an experience as close to a Physical Reunion on campus as possible. The Event Agency brought a platform for such online events as used in the corporate world, which we decided to adapt to the Reunion format ... and it was a major success. I would strongly urge organizers of a Reunion to use a proper online event hosting platform for a truly memorable experience.

**Mementos and Logistics of Shipping Mementos:** In our earlier 20<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Reunions, we had given Sweatshirts/T-Shirts to batchmates. An Online Reunion would require shipment of mementos to batchmates - costs of which are quite exorbitant for shipments abroad. After some debate, we concluded that the nostalgia associated with mementos was quite strong, so we decided to go ahead with them .... but in a way such that we wouldn't have to deal with challenges like exchange/returns of items .... so, items of clothing were ruled out. To cut costs, we also took steps to do bulk shipping to countries with significant number of batchmates, with local shipping thereafter in those countries.

**Involve as many batchmates as possible:** This is possibly a no-brainer but nonetheless important to state in the context of an Online Reunion. Nothing like involvement for a sense of belonging.

**Involve families:** An Online Reunion provides the flexibility to involve batchmates families actively as

performers, something which would be more difficult to do in a Physical Reunion. If you look around the batch, talent will be in abundance. We leveraged this aspect - with spouses and kids performing songs, among other things. However, post-Reunion, we realized there are many more talented spouses and kids - so, while we did make an effort to tap talents of families for this Reunion, we could have done more.

**Reduce Live Events and over-dependence on the Internet:** Ironic as it may sound in the context of an Online Reunion, try to reduce over-dependence on the Internet! Stability of Internet connections and bandwidth availability is still an issue in many parts, so be judicious in planning for Live Events. Also, some performers, especially non-professional batch performers, may prefer to do rehearsals and recordings and then use the one which in their opinion is the best. We planned a number of events as recordings, which were played at the Reunion. In fact, this allowed for editing etc. which gave a more professional feel to the proceedings. Doing it this way does require prior planning & greater efforts but it is worth the time and effort for a smooth Reunion.

**Create a Theme/Tagline for the Reunion:** Something which people can associate with and which gets associated with the Reunion.

**Connect with the Institute and take support from the Dean of Alumni & External Relations and the Alumni Office:** The Dean of Alumni & External Relations and the Alumni Office serve as the nodal point for any support that we as alumni need and did a phenomenal job in ensuring we received all the support required for the successful conduct of our 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion; they also actively participated in our Reunion. Engage fairly early.

## FINANCIAL PLANNING

**Finding Sponsors:** The scale at which you wish to do a Reunion depends a great deal on the financial resources available. Also, you want to ensure that you have an idea of the budget to work with fairly early in the planning process, as a lot of planning decisions will hinge around this aspect. With most batchmates doing well in life, it is but natural to expect that all will contribute their fair share to a Reunion .... good in theory but fraught with challenges. So, in possibly the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Planning Team, we took a decision that we will find Sponsors for the Reunion .... more

specifically, find Sponsors within our batch itself. We agreed that a Batch Reunion had nothing specific to offer to an External Sponsor and also did not want to be burdened with dealing with the demands of any such sponsors. So, we quickly identified potential sponsors in our batch itself and each one of them responded with unprecedented generosity. We hence started off on a sound footing in terms of knowing that financials would be the least of our worries and that the onus was now on us, the Planning Team, to put together a Reunion befitting the generosity of our fellow batch sponsors.

**Contributions by Participating Batchmates:** Given we were covered by Sponsors, there was really no need to ask all participating batchmates to contribute. However, we needed to know the numbers of participating batchmates to plan for mementos for all – so, we felt that a nominal contribution amount covering the cost of the mementos being planned would be taken from all participating batchmates. This move helped in planning for numbers of mementos required to be procured.

**Keeping track of costs:** Exuberance is high while planning for a Reunion and there will be occasions when random thoughts get floated around ... so, there is a need to take care that exuberance doesn't get the better of prudence & practicality!

## PLANNING FOR EVENTS - WHAT KIND OF EVENTS TO HAVE?

Creating an engaging agenda of events which would keep the batch together over the duration of the Reunion is always a challenge and more so in an Online Reunion, where people are participating from their homes. Some thoughts on what we did to make it a success are as follows:

**Batchmates as Performers. Music is a great binding force** and you need to leverage it for a successful Online Reunion. People connect a lot better and enjoy performances by those whom they consider their own i.e. fellow batchmates. Every batch is bound to have passionate music buffs – you need to get a passionate music buff onboard to plan and create the musical segment of the Reunion.

Also, there are bound to be batchmates or families with unique talents that can be leveraged. We have a batch spouse who is a Professional Stage Director and she gladly agreed to do an Online Play for us, with batchmates as performers. The point here is to

create something innovative based on talents and skills available in the batch and families.

**Professional Performers/Artistes:** Given an Online Reunion format, professionals with skills in performing online was a challenge; also, the success of online performances was something untested by us. We chose the approach of having performers/artistes with a connect to what we were planning - either a connection to IIMA or a connection to our batch. This turned out to be one of the best decisions we made ... as an example, the professional music artiste we had at the Inaugural Session was a batchmate's son who performs professionally, with his performance truly being from the heart and it was one of the highlights of the Reunion.

**Memorial Session to Departed Batchmates:** Our batch has lost 10 good friends and we felt it was important to pay homage to them. An Online Reunion format allowed us to bring in families of some of these departed batchmates for them to share their thoughts at the Reunion - they were truly touched that we remembered their loved ones and were overwhelmed by the touching tributes paid. They also shared their thoughts and some said it was a cleansing session for them, being with the set of individuals with whom their loved son/daughter/spouse had spent a wonderful 2 years at IIMA. It was a cathartic & emotional session with plenty of tears flowing ... and the online format probably ensured emotions could be hidden from public display! I would recommend this session strongly to any batch planning a Reunion - have a Memorial Session, get batchmates close to the departed ones to pay tribute/s and, if possible, invite the families to participate.

**Faculty Felicitations & Tribute Session:** This is one session where we felt grateful for doing an Online Reunion. 30 years since leaving IIMA and with most faculty retired & no more being on campus, many not even in Ahmedabad. An Online Reunion allowed us the pleasure of having a large number of faculty participate online - many of whom would have been unable to join a Physical Reunion. Also very gratifying and amusing was the fact that faculty who attended treated it like a mini Faculty Reunion amongst themselves. So, we were indeed honoured that our 30<sup>th</sup> Batch Reunion also served as a mini-Faculty Reunion ... the bonhomie amongst the faculty was wonderful to see and the anecdotes some of them related were

wonderful.

As a batch, we believe that the Faculty Felicitation Session in particular is best suited for an Online Format, given that many of our revered faculty who taught us are aged and may be unable to travel for a Reunion. An Alumni Reunion without an opportunity to thank them for making us what we are would be incomplete; hence, even in a Physical Reunion format, this session is possibly done in an Online Format for maximum faculty to participate.

**Nostalgia Quiz:** A Reunion is all about nostalgia and re-living student days with friends. A Nostalgia Quiz offers the opportunity to bring back memories of campus, professors, incidents, batchmates & even cases maybe.

**Interactions amongst Batchmates:** While a variety of programmes can be planned, a Reunion is ultimately about connecting with batchmates and interacting with them .... re-creating such interactions in an online environment can be challenging. This is the toughest component to plan in an Online Reunion and a lot of thought needs to go into planning for multiple slots during the Reunion where there can be free-flowing interactions amongst batchmates, either with or without themes. We did a combination of both - some free-flowing interactions with no theme and some with structured themes.

**Plan events which are specifically amenable to an Online Format:** While considering this aspect, we hit upon the idea of an Online Bridge Event, as Bridge is easily amenable to being played online. A Bridge Tournament, in the days leading up to the Reunion, brought together 12 batchmates who had a fun session over 2 days. Another such event we planned was a Yoga Session on one of the mornings of the Reunion, with one of very own batchmates, a Yoga pro, serving as Yoga Master - a session which resonated very well amongst all.

As indicated earlier, the Faculty Felicitation Session, for batches of our vintage, is best suited for an Online Format, given that many of the revered faculty who taught us are aged and may be unable to travel for a Reunion. An Alumni Reunion without an opportunity to thank them for making us what we are would be incomplete; hence, even in a Physical Reunion format, this session is possibly done in an Online Format for maximum faculty to participate. The way forward for Alumni Reunions is thus possibly a Hybrid Reunion Format, with some sessions being Online even in a Physical Reunion format.

The PGP'90 Batch would like to thank the Dean of Alumni & External Relations for the invitation to share the experience of organizing an Online Reunion.



*Glimpse of the winter mornings at LKP*



## A TRIBUTE TO SURESH MENON (PGP 1996)

“A traditional South Indian thick moustache over a roguish smile, for those familiar with Malayalam movies, think a thinner Mohanlal but with the same level of effervescence. We lost Suresh on 26th November 2020. He leaves behind his wife, Bindu and a son, Varun.



cepting people as they are. He knew the drama of daily life was drama and therefore accorded it the right reverence, i.e., not too much.

Suresh had worked in Tea Plantations before joining IIMA, therefore, we called him Planter (very creative of us). He was one of the older men of our batch but if you had seen him in conversations or on stage in LKP, you would not suspect that.

He was young at heart and full of zest for life.

Suresh was from a different mould. At IIMA, in a world where daily life used to pulse with tests, grades and meetings, he would smilingly walk a pace slower or faster, depending on the circumstances. Where the general conversation was about career, Suresh would comfortably lean into life. He would never judge (and people would not dare judge him) anyone. He was comfortable about ac-

Suresh was a good friend and a source of joy and pleasure. Planter, we'll miss you.” - **SK Prasad (PGP 1996)**

## REMEMBERING ASHISH JOSHI (PGP 1996)

“Ashish Joshi was known as a quiet and thoughtful person, and a caring friend, among his batchmates at IIMA. In dorm meetings and project groups, his mates would often await from Ashish what they knew would be a balanced word. He had an interest in marketing and quantitative topics, and his dorm mates remember the ease with which Ashish would approach difficult MRIS problems.” - **Biswanath Bhattacharya, PGP 1996**

“A shish’s love for Market Research inspired him to do a second MBA from Terry College of Business, Georgia with specialization in MR in 2000. He was offered a full scholarship and he joined Clorox’s MR Division in 2001. He stayed with Clorox until his last day and worked on many strategic initiatives. He was deeply respected and admired by his colleagues at Clorox.



as possible. He was a role model for his family and friends. Everyone looked up to him for advice in his friends and family.

I was lucky to spend time with Ashish both in India (we shared same flat in Vile Parle) and then in the US during my umpteen business trips to the Bay Area in California. I would make it a point to stay with him and not in a hotel. Ashish and Mala were great hosts and used to

Ashish loved spending time with his family - wife Mala (ex-colleague from Indian Express and then joined Ashish at Clorox too, post her second MBA from the University of Wisconsin) and two lovely kids Vishaan (15 years) and Samyra (12 years). Twice every year (summer and winter break), Ashish would explore a new exotic location globally with his family. He wanted to spend as much quality time with his family

be super excited every time I would visit them. They would start preparations in advance for my visit. We shared a love for barbecuing. We would barbecue in their backyard and chat over drinks about past memories and current affairs. These sessions used to conclude either with Kishore Kumar songs or Mirza Ghalib shayari. Ashish loved poetry.” - **Anshul Verma, PGP 1996**

# REMEMBERING DILIP SHRIPAD GOKHALE (PGP 1969)



**D**ilip Shripad Gokhale was born on November 26, 1947 at Pune to Sri IG Shripad Gokhale and Srimati Indumati Gokhale. Dilip was an excellent student. He graduated in Economics from Ferguson College, Pune, and was the recipient of a Gold Medal for his brilliant academic performance. Dilip was a good sportsman and represented Maharashtra in badminton.

After graduating from IIMA, he worked first for SICOM in Mumbai and later for CENTRON in Aurangabad. In 1972, he married the charming Shubhada Pandit, who was to be his greatest pillar of strength.

In the early seventies, Dilip worked as the General Manager at Mahyco Seeds in India. In 1980, he joined SANDOZ. In 1987, he set up Syngenta's seeds operation in India, starting it as a one-man operation and then going on to head the business in India till 1998. The business was extremely profitable and current sales in India exceed \$70 million.

In 1999, Dilip moved to Basel, Switzerland as Global Head, Field Crops, Syngenta. In October 2002, he was requested to fix the Asia Pacific Region, which had been in the red for over five years. As Head, Field Crops and Region Head, APAC, he increased sales from \$47 Mio 2002 to 131 Mio in 2006 and EBITDA from negative to 31 Mio. He served on the Novartis/Syngenta Seeds' Global Management Committee from 1999 to 2007.

In 2007 he assumed the responsibility of Global Head, Biofuels Development at Syngenta, and in 2009 the additional responsibility as Senior Advisor, Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture. Dilip has held positions of Chairman of Board of Directors of Syngenta Seed companies in Korea and Thailand and Director of six Syngenta Seed companies in China, Japan and India. He retired from Syngenta at the end of 2010 after nearly 31 years with the company.

After retirement, Dilip was an advisor to the NGO



*Mr Dilip Gokhale with batchmates from the class of 1969 when they went to Arusha to visit the wildlife sanctuaries of Tanzania*

AGRA at Nairobi. He soon started his own company, AFRICASIA Seed Company, at Arusha, Tanzania. This company became his passion and soon spread its wings to Kenya and Uganda, with customers in many parts of Africa.

He had served on the Board of the Management School of the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok (the other Indian Board member being Narayana Murthy of Infosys). He taught at the Seed Enterprises Management Institute of Nairobi University. Dilip was also a visiting professor at Cornell University's Cape Town campus. He had conducted seminars on Agribusiness Management at Harvard Business School and at Market Matters' programmes at Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

His crowning glory was a UN Award in 2008 for his pioneering research and development work

on tropicalisation of sugar beets.

Dilip was known amongst batchmates and colleagues for his friendly and helpful nature, ever willing to help others develop their careers. He had an engaging smile, was always approachable and supportive to his team, his peers and his friends. Small instances, such as helping unknown people in day to day life to supporting friends in finding consulting agreements, defined him as a human, a leader and a friend. Many a batchmates have enjoyed the hospitality and assistance of Dilip and Shubhada while visiting Tanzania's wildlife parks.

We lost Dilip suddenly on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 after a short illness, while he was at Arusha, Tanzania.

The Class of '69 will miss him and his cheerful demeanour.

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## IIM AHMEDABAD RESEARCHERS TO REPRESENT INDIA IN FABLE CONSORTIUM

The team is led by Prof Ranjan Kumar Ghosh, who has outlined FABLE Pathways for India identifying ways in which food and land-use systems can contribute to increasing climate ambitions, aligning climate mitigation and biodiversity protection policies along with achieving other sustainable development priorities in India.

According to Prof Ghosh, FABLE Pathways represents two pathways for food and land-use systems for 2020-2050. The current trends represent the Business as usual scenario and sustainable more ambitious pathway.

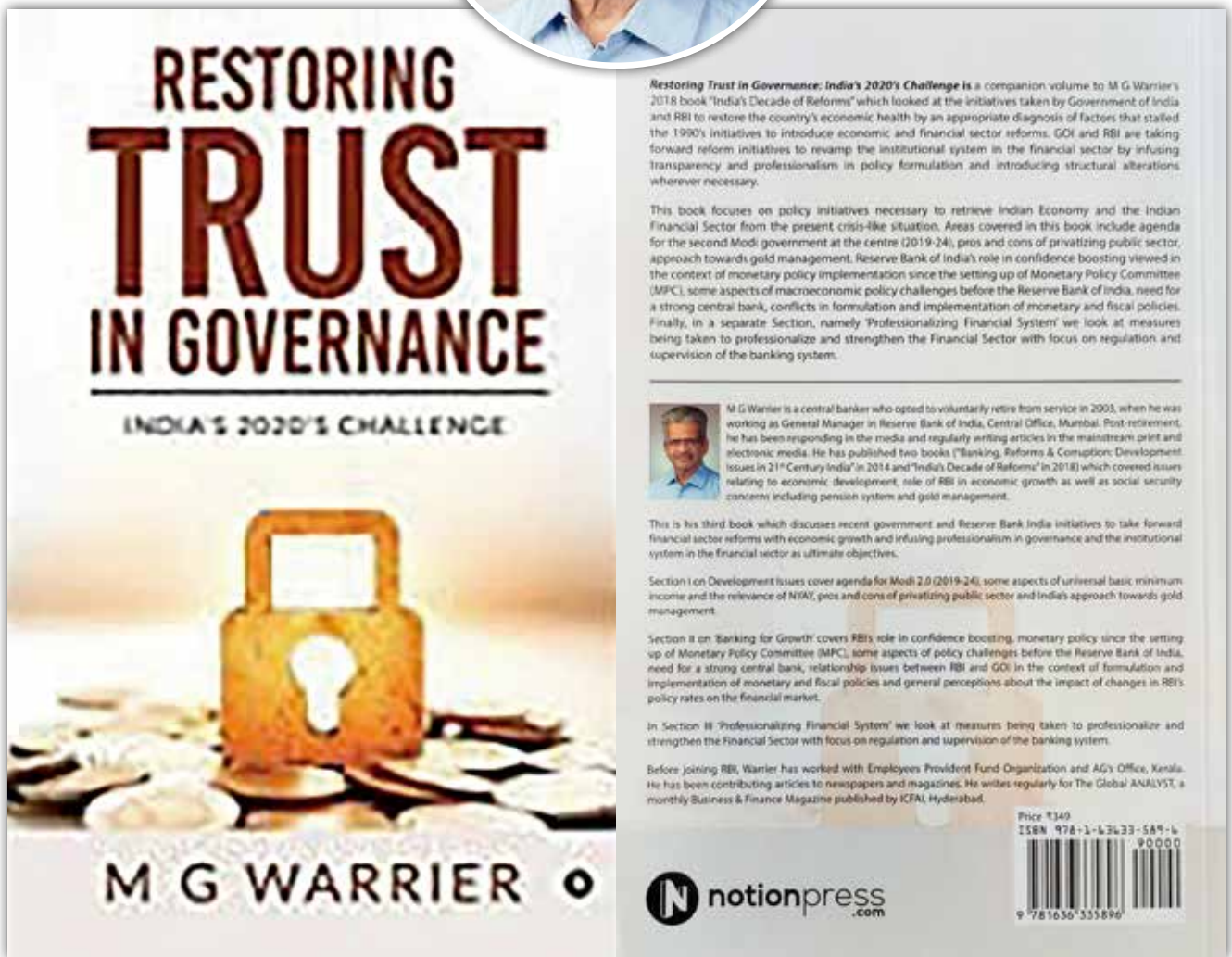
### **FABLE Pathways as a Problem-Solving Method**

It is stated that these pathways examine the trade-offs between achieving the FABLE Targets under limited land availability and constraints to balance supply and demand at the national and global levels within a global partial equilibrium model - Model of Agricultural Production and the Impact on Environment (MAgPIE) which is developed by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

Prof Ghosh also highlights that the FABLE pathways can be a method for problem-solving by working backward from mid-century targets focusing on the major transformations which are needed to achieve them. He also expresses that tools for countries to integrate biodiversity conservation and restoration are also provided along with food systems in the climate strategies especially in the run-up for climate and biodiversity COPs in 2021.

**About the FABLE Consortium** The Food, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Land-Use, and Energy (FABLE) Consortium is convened as part of the Food and Land-Use Coalition (FOLU). It aims to understand how countries can transition towards sustainable land-use and food systems. In particular, it focusses on how countries can collectively meet associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Paris Agreement. FABLE comprises 20 country teams, which develop data and modelling infrastructure to promote ambitious, integrated strategies towards sustainable land-use and food systems.

# RESTORING TRUST IN GOVERNANCE



**Restoring Trust in Governance: India's 2020's Challenge** is a companion volume to M G Warriar's 2018 book "India's Decade of Reforms" which looked at the initiatives taken by Government of India and RBI to restore the country's economic health by an appropriate diagnosis of factors that stalled the 1990's initiatives to introduce economic and financial sector reforms. GOI and RBI are taking forward reform initiatives to revamp the institutional system in the financial sector by infusing transparency and professionalism in policy formulation and introducing structural alterations wherever necessary.

This book focuses on policy initiatives necessary to retrieve Indian Economy and the Indian Financial Sector from the present crisis-like situation. Areas covered in this book include agenda for the second Modi government at the centre (2019-24), pros and cons of privatizing public sector, approach towards gold management, Reserve Bank of India's role in confidence boosting viewed in the context of monetary policy implementation since the setting up of Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), some aspects of macroeconomic policy challenges before the Reserve Bank of India, need for a strong central bank, conflicts in formulation and implementation of monetary and fiscal policies. Finally, in a separate Section, namely 'Professionalizing Financial System' we look at measures being taken to professionalize and strengthen the Financial Sector with focus on regulation and supervision of the banking system.



M G Warriar is a central banker who opted to voluntarily retire from service in 2003, when he was working as General Manager in Reserve Bank of India, Central Office, Mumbai. Post-retirement, he has been responding in the media and regularly writing articles in the mainstream print and electronic media. He has published two books ("Banking, Reforms & Corruption: Development Issues in 21<sup>st</sup> Century India" in 2014 and "India's Decade of Reforms" in 2018) which covered issues relating to economic development, role of RBI in economic growth as well as social security concerns including pension system and gold management.

This is his third book which discusses recent government and Reserve Bank India initiatives to take forward financial sector reforms with economic growth and infusing professionalism in governance and the institutional system in the financial sector as ultimate objectives.

Section I on Development Issues cover agenda for Modi 2.0 (2019-24), some aspects of universal basic minimum income and the relevance of NRIAT, pros and cons of privatizing public sector and India's approach towards gold management.

Section II on Banking for Growth covers RBI's role in confidence boosting, monetary policy since the setting up of Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), some aspects of policy challenges before the Reserve Bank of India, need for a strong central bank, relationship issues between RBI and GOI in the context of formulation and implementation of monetary and fiscal policies and general perceptions about the impact of changes in RBI's policy rates on the financial market.

In Section III 'Professionalizing Financial System' we look at measures being taken to professionalize and strengthen the Financial Sector with focus on regulation and supervision of the banking system.

Before joining RBI, Warriar has worked with Employees Provident Fund Organization and AG's Office, Kerala. He has been contributing articles to newspapers and magazines. He writes regularly for The Global ANALYST, a monthly Business & Finance Magazine published by ICFAI, Hyderabad.

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# HOW TO SHARPEN YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS

An alumnus of AFP 2009, IIMA; Lt Col Prem Vas (Retd) has vast experience of two decades plus in the Indian Army where he commanded an Artillery Unit and a decade plus in the corporate specializing in HR leadership & Operations in four different industries. He is a leadership coach and is keen on grooming potential leaders for the corporate and young aspirants. An ardent writer and speaker, he is a specialist in Human Capital Management and is foraying into the Infopreneurship space. He can be reached at [premvas@prehanjay.com](mailto:premvas@prehanjay.com) and [www.leadershipwithvas.com](http://www.leadershipwithvas.com)



## HOW TO SHARPEN YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS

Be a Rock-star at Interview!  
A must have book for an Intern to a CEO



LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
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**SYNOPSIS** Interviews are inescapable part of life for all professionals. From an intern to a CEO, every few years, one goes through an interview - it's no more the 'golden watch era' when one works for a company for decades before retiring! That is the practical reality today. With the pandemic responsible for the unusual demand-supply of job markets across the globe, the



need for excelling in interviews is even more pronounced.

A lot of well-deserving candidates lose out on their potential jobs due to 'under' & 'over' confidence, inadequate preparation and inability to make the right 'pitch' for the job.

## HOW TO SHARPEN YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS

Be a Rock-star at Interviews!  
A must have book for an Intern to a CEO

### About the Book

- \* The unforeseen pandemic brought tough times that leaves many of us looking to transition our jobs - which means interviews we have to win!
- \* Irrespective of the pandemic, we are likely to change jobs sometime or the other in our career - we need to revisit interview skills and this book gives you just that - very concisely!
- \* This is for interns, management trainees, employees & leaders at all levels in any industry and anybody else who needs to sharpen their interview skills.
- \* Including entrepreneurs - who are always being unwittingly 'interviewed' by their stakeholders to achieve crucial business goals.

### About the Author

With more than three decades of a professional career in the Armed Forces and the Corporate, Prem has a wide range of experience interviewing potential candidates from four different industries starting from an intern to the C-Suite.

This book is a result of the essence he wishes to share from his valuable experience in what makes a 'winning interview', presenting it in an easy-to-read conversational style.

Currently, he is a management consultant and lives in Aluva, Kerala, India with his wife.

He delights in mentoring potential leaders and writes for leisure. Of late, he is foraying into the world of Info-preneurship.

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YouTube Channel: VAS V8ES



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The book has refreshingly new content on how to match perceptions of the interviewer and interviewee to enhance the probability of getting selected through mastering the art of *practical* preparation.

Specific chapters deal with aspects on how to 'tune' your mind before and during the interview, including what needs to be said or done to "stand apart" in the minds of the interviewer so that one 'ups' the chances of being selected.

A chapter on frequently and not so usual trending FAQs with techniques of smartly answering them to capture the interviewer's attention is added and is very useful in framing response to interviewer's questions. Blank spaces have been added to make notes for the reader to practice answering the right way.

Keeping with current times, a chapter on excelling at 'Virtual Interviews' gives some practical tips which one takes for granted and thus cannot be ignored in ensuring seamless interview experience.

In keeping pace with trends in the digital world to capture on smart phones, tabs and other devices; the book has QR coded content on checklists for 'preparing Resume's/CVs', 'before the interview', including details of social media content for additional information which the author has shared in his YouTube Channel "Vas Vibes".

The author has captured the nuances of excelling at interviews gathered during his vast experience as HR leader, wherein he has immense experience in the number of interviews he has conducted across the spectrum of his career and job designations. The book condenses these experiences and shares those

finer aspects from his multi-dimensional profession that makes or breaks an interview opportunity.

A special chapter captures the pearls of wisdom from selected CEOs & CHROs of "What they look for" in interviews and "What puts them off"!

In a crisp, concise & no-nonsense conversational style, this book is a reference material for an entire career lifespan – from a Graduate to Senior Leadership.

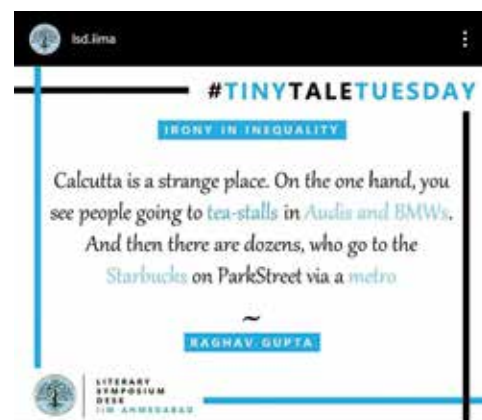
### Book Review by Vishal Sharma (AFP 2009)

'The book captures the key steps of an interview, right from the preparation stage, the interview per se, and the follow up stage. Based on the career level of an interviewee, the author prepares each of the interviewee categories on what to expect during their interview or 'interactions at higher levels', as he calls job interviews for senior level professionals.

With the help of easy and relatable examples, the book explains all the elements that can help one sharpen their existing skills and tap their potential to create that right 'first impression! I personally liked the part of the book that provides those essential tips that we may know at the back of our mind but need to make a conscious effort to imbibe and execute.

In his very simple and conversational style, the author captivates and maintains the interest of the reader and gives enough space for self-retrospection and reflection before explaining any new concepts, ideas, that also helps address any understanding gaps.

Last but not the least, the book also talks about the shift of interviews from in-person conversations to online video chats which have made us all more flexible during these disruptive times of Covid pandemic.'



# FUTURISTIC OUTLOOK TO PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

Authored by 33 students from the ProdMan Club and ProdX Club of IIM Ahmedabad

Available for free on an online platform, this is a book for the aspiring Product Manager, new age tech product enthusiast and truly anyone interested in understanding what makes the technology around us so engaging and effective.

Rather than repeat and reuse the wealth of jargon and frameworks that the internet buries one in, this book focuses on 2 simple and powerful ideas. First, it brings the average reader up to speed on today's most relevant technologies,



including artificial intelligence and machine learning, and methods of problem solving, such as design thinking. Secondly, it cuts straight to learning by doing, critiquing apps that every reader has used, ranging across Uber, Amazon and Zomato.

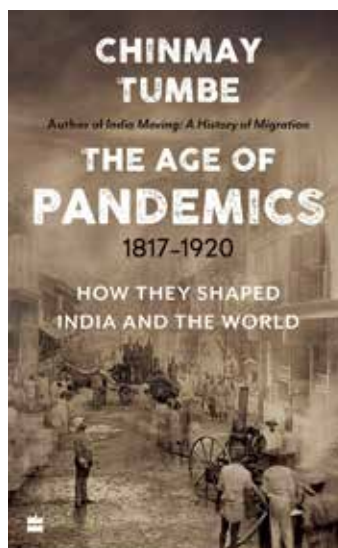
Depending on the reader's level of knowledge and understanding of Product Management, they may find tremendous value in each chapter of this book, or crisp insights by leafing through specific sections.

## AGE OF PANDEMICS (1817-1920): HOW THEY SHAPED INDIA AND THE WORLD

Authored by Prof. Chinmay Tumbe

From lockdowns to lockups, viruses to vaccination, the movement of people to the movement of bowels, from rats to cats, and more, *The Age of Pandemics* chronicles the many facets of the cholera, plague and influenza pandemics, which claimed over 70 million lives between 1817 and 1920, with India being the epicentre in all these episodes.

The book argues that the period between the early nineteenth century to the early twentieth century - an age otherwise known for the worldwide spread of the industrial revolution, imperialism and globalization -

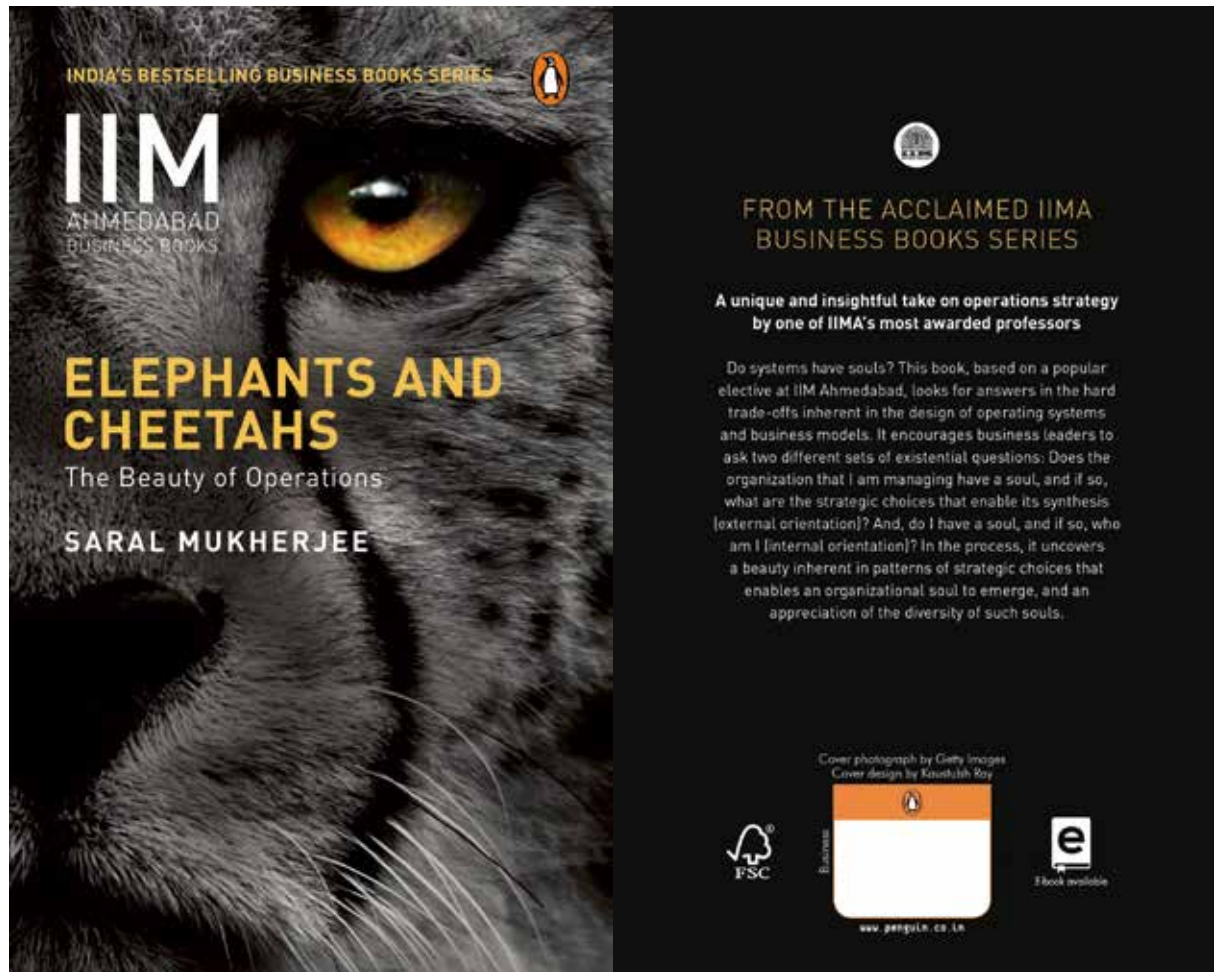


was also the 'age of pandemics'. It documents the scale of devastation, the likely causes and consequences, and the resilience with which people faced those pandemics.

The book also provides the first comprehensive coverage of the world's greatest demographic disaster ever to descend upon a country in a short period of time - the influenza pandemic in India in 1918, which claimed more lives than all the battle casualties of World War I. And it shows the continuing relevance of learning from those times to tackle contemporary challenges, such as COVID-19.

# ELEPHANTS AND CHEETAHS: THE BEAUTY OF OPERATIONS

Authored by Prof Saral Mukherjee, based on a popular elective in operations strategy.



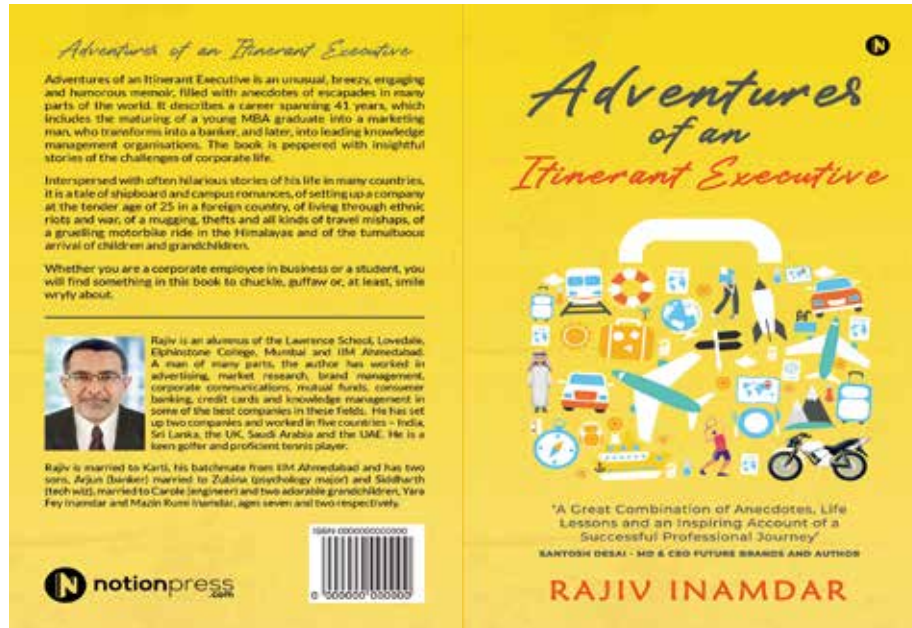
**P**rof Mukherjee specializes in operations management and is involved in research, teaching and consulting in the area of supply chain redesign, operations strategy, marketing-operations interface and managing platform businesses. With an academic career spanning close to two decades at IIMA, Prof Mukherjee has taught core courses on Operations, Marketing and

Ethics for MBA students as well as working executives. Additionally, he has been the recipient of the 'Marti Mannariah Gurunath Outstanding Teacher Award' at IIMA in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, also the 'SRK Distinguished PGPX Faculty Award' at IIMA in 2017 and 2020.



## ADVENTURES OF AN ITINERANT EXECUTIVE

Authored by Mr. Rajiv Inamdar (PGP 1976)



"A delightful book that takes you down memory lane and tells you stories about Rajiv's life while growing up and then as a professional manager and business leader. It is a highly entertaining memoir replete with anecdotes narrated in a self-deprecating humorous vein.

We both started life a few years apart in advertising and became brand managers of a brand with a storied history- Horlicks.

A treasure trove of anecdotes of life in various countries across roles in diverse industries, *Adventures of an Itinerant Executive* is a must read for those who do not wish to tread the beaten path but constantly reinvent themselves." - **Sanjeev Bikhchandani**, Co- Founder Info Edge (naukri.com, 99acres.com, jeevansathi.com, shiksha.com, naukrigulf.com) and Ashoka University

"The celebrated management guru, Peter Drucker believed that market research is the quintessence of marketing. In a riveting narrative of his own market research experience over four decades in several countries, Rajiv Inamdar has proved once again how right Peter Drucker is. For anyone interested in marketing, Rajiv's book is an asset and a must read." - **A.R. Ghanshyam**, Former Indian Envoy to Angola and Nigeria

"Rajiv Inamdar takes the reader into the many dimensions of his captivating life – glimpses of four generations of family, professional vignettes, happenings in places around the world. Rajiv's writing is endearing and authentic, laced with stories of success as well as of challenges and unexpected incidents -- captured with an eye for detail. The arc of Rajiv's memoir includes the opening of the Indian economy and a period of its unprecedented growth. The itinerant in him takes us also to Sri Lanka, the Middle East and the UK. Professionally too, he traverses many worlds, sharing insights into the domains of advertising, brand management, market research, consumer banking and knowledge management. Rajiv gives us an altogether absorbing narrative of aspirations and experiences lived in the slipstream of an emerging India." - **Arun Kumar**, Chairman & CEO of KPMG in India and Author

"A very readable account of a life spent gathering diverse experiences. The book is a great combination of some lovely anecdotes, life lessons narrated with a lightness of touch and an inspiring account of a successful professional journey. The writing is fluid and easy, and sprinkled with a liberal dose of humour. A highly enjoyable read." - **Santosh Desai**, MD & CEO Future Brands and Author



The Maasai tribe

## FOR THE LOVE OF THE WILD

*After being a professional wildlife photographer, experiential nature travel company owner one could imagine what would come next for Alankar Chandra (PGP 2009). His multiple visits to Maasai Mara National Reserve in Kenya and love for the African wild culminated in him setting up a tented camp in the famed national reserve since September of 2019.*

**MASAI MARA & THE CAMP** Speaking of it, Alankar says “At Wild Voyager (his travel company), Africa as a whole was always the pièce de resistance of our unique nature experiences, and in particular I was in love with Masai Mara much before I had even dreamt of starting a travel company. The diversity of wildlife and the abundance of it here is at a scale which is simply unmatched by any other safari park in Africa or the world. As a wildlife photographer it used to be



my favorite hunting ground. So for me when this opportunity came to acquire a tented camp right in the heart of this huge park, I decided to lap it up at an instant. We are in middle of a 1500 sq km wild savannah, with the nearest village being 1 hour away. We decided to call it Olgatuni Camp, which is the Maasai word for Lion and are currently operating with 14 self-contained tents”.

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM** While a park like Masai



*Classic leopard hunt*



*A typical river crossing*



*Aerial view of the camp*

Mara is famous for its Big Cat sightings and the great migration, which is said to be the greatest natural spectacle on the planet, however there is a deeper story of how the man and the wild co-exist and how this precious wildlife are conserved for the future generations. Speaking of it, he says “The beauty of wildlife conservation in a country like Kenya is that everyone realizes the value of tourism and the local employment it generates, and the locals will give their all to protect the wildlife. We ourselves

participate in a few local conservation initiatives as a responsible denizen of this ecosystem. We are located in one of the richest patch of wildlife within Mara with 3 Lion prides, 2 Cheetah families and a handful of Leopards surrounding us, so it becomes our responsibility to adapt all kinds of eco-friendly measures to ensure that the environment is not harmed in any way. Actually over 95% of our 30 acres’ area is a dense natural forest and we plan to retain it that way.”



*Classic Mara sunset*



*One of the 14 self contained tents*



*Lions in the savannahs*



*Battle of hippos*



*Cheetahs hunting in coalition*

**THE MAASAI TRIBE** However, there is more to Mara than just the wildlife, there are multitude of experiences in the bushes like a bush dinner, sundowner, balloon safari and then there is interaction with the famed Maasai tribes. Speaking of it he says “The land where Masai Mara stands today, the 3000 sq km of it, belonged to the local Maasai tribes. About 50% of it was taken by the govt. and built into Masai Mara national reserve, where we are located and the other half is split into many private conservancies, which are privately managed land but conserved well for tourism.

The entire tourism eco-system is built in a way that the locals benefit in terms of employment, sponsorships or some lease rental share from the hotels. Most of our staffs are Maasais employed from local villages, but they have been trained to international hospitality standards. Staying with us feels like you are staying in a Maasai village with endless stories about their culture and traditions, while you enjoy modern day hospitality and creature comforts. The evening bonfire with Maasai traditional dances is an experience the guests cherish”.

## MY SESSIONS AS CASE PROTAGONIST AT IIMA



**By Madan Mohanka (Chairman, Tega Industries Ltd; IIMA- PGP Batch of 1967)**

The Case method of teaching has been the cornerstone of IIMA's pedagogy since 1960s. I feel humbled and privileged that over the course of the last forty years, several instructors have written and taught case studies based on different challenging situations confronted by Tega Industries, a company that I founded after graduating from IIMA. Contributing to the development and teaching of these cases studies has been my way of giving back to the institution that has taught me so much about life.

Recently, Prof. Chitra Singla, Associate Professor at IIMA and Dr. Bulbul Singh- an FDP alumnus of the institute wrote a case titled, '*Tega Industries: Journey of an Indian MNC*'. This case was taught in the AGMP, Strategic Management (D2D) and PGP courses of IIMA. I was invited for a 30-minute talk as a guest speaker to these live classroom sessions, to provide insights into the decision- making processes related to my company's internationalization strategy.



**Professor Jahar Saha, former Director of IIMA,** commented that this case "*dealt with all aspects of a corporate entity, namely; strategy, structure, system, staff, skill, style and shared value.*"

It pleases me that this case offered valuable learning to many budding entrepreneurs and practicing professionals. I have been overwhelmed by the deluge of messages pouring in since these classes were conducted. Out of the 180+ messages received; I wish to share a few responses:

"This by far was the most exciting and life changing learning experience for me. Analyzing the case and learning about the dilemma related to each situation from the entrepreneur himself was the best thing that could have happened to me as a student. The protagonist's risk-taking appetite, his dedication to his company, his passion for doing what he does has got me thinking about my own entrepreneurial dreams and how to pursue them." - PGP student

"I have no words to express how motivated I feel today after listening to MM and seeing his 'Never Give Up' attitude. Having worked in the corporate world and then plunging to start my own company, I could revisit the mistakes which I made in the initial years of my entrepreneurial journey." - AGMP participant

"Sir, it was a pleasure learning from you. When you discussed your struggles, we were with you in emotion and we connected with you. This impact would last for a lifetime. When you mentioned that failing is okay, in fact good, we remembered all our managers who advised otherwise, Sir we were moved... What we learnt from you in those thirty minutes is something we haven't learnt in our entire careers." - AGMP participant

"The case on Tega made me understand that business strategies cannot be generalized, the playing field is just not even. Compared to challenges faced by foreign MNCs, the problems that Tega had to deal with were far more complex. Simply doing cases on large MNCs does not give you the whole picture." - PGP student

"Since childhood we have always been taught that failure is bad and that we should not make mistakes. Instead of learning from our own mistakes, we are prodded to learn from someone else's mistakes. But today after the lecture, my faith in human resilience has become stronger. I learnt that one should never doubt oneself. Work hard, build intrinsic knowledge, stay strong, make mistakes and learn from them. Every crisis brings

opportunities and most importantly there might be ups and downs but we must stand tall and always keep moving forward.” - AGMP participant

Personally, it was really gratifying when students could integrate learnings from the case with their own experiences and career aspirations. What was it about this case study that evoked such a phenomenal response?

Instructors typically follow a particular structure while conducting case discussions, but I feel, there is a need to sometimes go beyond the prescribed structures to make teaching really impactful. Here are some reflections from my recent sessions at IIMA.

- Presence of the case protagonist in the classroom can make discussions livelier and more engaging. When business leaders share their perspectives, wisdom and know-how, accumulated through years of practice, it enriches students’ learning.
- During discussions, students tended to jump to conclusions without sufficient diagnosis of the problem. I believe, the real purpose of case discussion is served only when the participants’ managerial and problem-solving skills are challenged, and their critical and creative thinking skills are prodded. That is when they start delving deeper and learn more. Case discussions must promote structured diagnosis as an approach to problem solving.
- Developing rich content based on the unique experiences of Indian companies to sensitise students to the fast changing set of market realities and managerial challenges.
- In real life business environment, problems rarely impact only one discipline to the exclusion of others. Cases that integrate problems across organizational boundaries can prepare students better to face complex market realities.
- I think, students really enjoy sessions when business leaders talk about their failings and how they revived their business after they made mistakes. It is important to create a conscious ability in students to learn from mistakes.
- Apart from building intellectual capacities, I feel *value education* is equally important for building entrepreneurial flair and chiseling leadership skills.



**Professor Rabikar Chatterjee** from University of Pittsburgh and an IIMA Gold-Medallist remarked, *“This feedback is truly amazing! The underlying*

*story is a remarkable lesson on various dimensions that few, if any business cases capture. When you were there in person to bring all of it to life, it would have been a very special experience for all attendees.”*

I hope that my sessions will serve as a guide for students on their personal journeys towards success, and also help the beloved professors at this institution to touch and inspire even more lives with every class they conduct.



# A SIX POINT AGENDA FOR TV SERIALS

By Mr T S Srinivasan (PGP 1967)

**INTRODUCTION** This paper is a sequel to my earlier piece titled AN UNEASY LOOK AT TV SERIALS that appeared in the October 2017 issue of the alumni magazine, in which I had highlighted six major problems that seemed to chip away from the potential glory of TV serials. I now present a 6-point agenda that might be of interest to all stakeholders of the television industry.

**LENGTH OF THE SERIAL** Change over to the idea of one year serials, with no more than 300 episodes per serial. Say goodbye to 1000 episode serials, lasting three years or longer. It is simply too long and is bound to lose viewer interest. Particularly important, in all creative work, is the idea of closure - closing the show at the right time, with all loose ends tied up. An interesting quote from Henry Longfellow, the well-known American writer, comes to mind: 'Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending.'

That 300-episode serials might disrupt the revenues of TV serials, which essentially come from advertising, is a valid objection (Reference: India Study Channel, Experts, How Any Television Serial Earns, 1 July 2012). On the other hand, it is more than likely that both TV channels and serial producers might wish to augment their revenue streams in the form of new stories and new serials, rather than run the same serial for five years or longer.

**A GOOD STORY IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL** Go for really good stories, not a collection of disjointed episodes. The experience of Hollywood (Sound of Music, Dark Knight, Godfather, Gone with the Wind, Casablanca), and Bollywood (Sholay, Lagaan, Three Idiots, Anand, Mughal-E-Azam) shows that a good story is the most critical ingredient in the success of a film, followed closely by the induction of bankable stars and high quality direction. It is entirely possible that, in future, gifted actors might wish to look at the story first, before committing themselves to a serial.

**ON WRITING A GOOD STORY** Here are two interesting perspectives from Ayn Rand:

1. "I write, and read, for the sake of the story. My basic test for any story is: Would I want to meet these characters and observe these events in real life? Is this story an experience worth living through for its own sake? Is the pleasure of contemplating these characters an end in itself?"

2. "You don't build for the way people live, but for the way they should live. I don't write for people as they are, but as they could be, and should be "(Ayn Rand, author of Atlas Shrugged)

The big problem with most TV serials is that they do not get on with the story. They rely too much on creating and maintaining suspense, and, in the process, miss out on the real artistic element, namely highlighting the triumph of good over evil.

**FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE SERIALS** As far as possible, avoid portraying women in vicious and villainous roles. If needed, have one or two such characters, who do not conform to traditional female attributes of love and compassion, but show those roles in a manner that there is an early closure - either they



are outwitted by the good people in the serials, or are caught and punished by the law of the land. There is nothing to be gained by prolonging such roles, except polluting the minds of the audience, particularly those of young girls growing into adulthood.

**VILLAINS AND THE GOOD PEOPLE IN THE SERIAL** That villains are always one step ahead of their victims, and they are generally well prepared, in terms of hatching their evil plans, and putting them into action, is an observed reality. But, while the victims - the good people in the series - are admittedly one step behind the villains, there is no need to portray them as slow, sloppy and helpless victims of the villains. Instead, show them as people who can bounce back and checkmate the villains.

A serious problem with TV serials is the tendency to show the villains, particularly female characters in villainous roles, as outwitting the good people in the serials for long periods of time - sometimes two or three years over the life of the serial. There is no artistic justification for this tendency - its sole motive seems to be to keep the show on, somehow or the other. How does one breathe some art into this situation? The next paragraph presents a suggestion.

There is a deep rooted instinct in human nature - through the ages and across the world - that would like to see the victory of good over evil. And, tapping into that instinct could be a big step forward to both commercial and creative success for TV serials. A more detailed suggestion follows.

**WHY NOT CREATE A STRONG, NEW CHARACTER?** Create a character in these serials, like Jack Reacher in Lee Child's novels, with the detective powers of a Sherlock Holmes, and also the physical and mental strength to handle a fight or two with the villains. In Lee Child's novels, Jack Reacher is a retired member of the Military Police, with uncanny powers of investigation, and a knack of appearing on the crucial scene at just the right time, when the good guys in the novel are in the clutches of the villains. He rescues the good guys, hands over the bad guys to the Police, and then, can you believe it, he rides quietly into the sunset.

No forwarding address, no emotional farewells, and no one knows where he lives. Absolutely remarkable character.

I venture to suggest that the creation of such a character could add to the artistic, and commercial, success of serials. That such a character can eventually be branded, with the prospect of significant advertising revenues, is an opportunity for TV channels to pursue.

**PORTRAYING EMOTIONS** The tendency to build up emotions to almost boiling point may harm not just the elderly and the vulnerable sections of the audience, but may even scare viewers who might otherwise have stayed on with the serials. While there is a need to capture the many diverse points of view in a serial, it does seem possible, through appropriate direction and dialogue, to minimise fiery arguments on the screen. Avoiding excessive dependence on suspense and nail-biting finish should help.

**CONCLUSION** Given my limited exposure to the television industry, I present the above agenda, not as holy grail, but as a basis for discussion among key stakeholders of the industry. Its purpose will have been achieved if it stimulates some fresh thinking on the subject, leading possibly to some new approaches to TV serials.

I have continued to watch the Tamil serials that gave me the ammunition for my article of October 2017, particularly, the problems highlighted in this paper. I have been examining, silently in my own mind, whether in the past two years or more, TV serials have undergone any major change. I wish I could say YES but my answer is a reluctant NO. Serials have changed little in their approach. Particularly disappointing is their continued neglect of the most critical ingredient in the success of a serial, namely a good story - particularly of a kind that highlights the triumph of good over evil.

However, with so many creative minds at work in the world of television, I venture to hope that we will soon witness some big changes in TV serials as an art form.





# INTRODUCING THE IIMA ENDOWMENT FUND

By Chhavi Moodgal (PGP 2004), CEO - IIMA Endowment Fund

**E**ducational institutions can last for generations - Takshashila and Nalanda Universities were citadels of academic excellence for over 700 years; European academic institutions like Oxford and Cambridge set up as far back as 1096 and 1209 AD continue to be relevant even now. Fortified with financial independence, academic institutions can essentially last in perpetuity!

Endowments provide a long-term and predictable source of funding to an educational institute, which can help pave the way for its multi-generational sustainability. Endowments benefit the institution since they provide fiscal independence, enhanced prestige while creating avenues for reconnecting not only with the alumni but the community at large.

Giving back through the endowment is equally relevant to the donors since their contributions help in making a positive impact on the society and creating a sense of legacy-building. As an added bonus, these donations are also tax exempt.

The IIM Ahmedabad Endowment Fund was launched in June 2020 with an initial commitment of INR 100 crore by 10 IIMA alumni, with an intent of Giving Back and supporting IIMA in its future endeavours. Since then, more individuals have become associated with the Endowment Fund. The PGP batch of 1990 has become the first batch to contribute to the Institute through the Endowment Fund.

The Endowment Fund will support the Institute in achieving its strategic objectives - helping it make an even larger impact in the field of education, entrepreneurial leadership, management practice, and public policy. The vision of the Endowment Fund is to provide long term financial autonomy to the Institute; with the medium-term objective of growing the corpus to INR 1000 crore in 5 years. This would place IIMA on the path similar to that of leading global business schools, which have raised billions of dollars in their endowments, powered by their alumni. In India, IIMA

is the first management institute to come up with such an initiative.

Consistently ranked among the top business schools in India, our Alma Mater is a destination of choice for business school aspirants across the country and region. Over the last few months, the Institute has drafted its 2025 strategy, in consultation with McKinsey, containing 10 big moves to strengthen different dimensions of the Institute's mission: students, faculty, program portfolio and research output. These moves will enable the Institute to overcome existing challenges and enhance performance on critical parameters - thus leapfrogging both regional and global peers in business school rankings. Some of these priorities include – recruitment and retention of world class faculty, fostering high quality research, nurture student diversity, expanding program support and providing the appropriate organisational support and physical infrastructure to support these activities.

Under the guidance of the IIMA Board of Governors, the IIMA Endowment Fund is governed by its own Bye-Laws and is managed by an independent Endowment Board consisting of initial alumni contributors and the Director and Dean (Alumni and External Relations) of IIMA. The Endowment Board oversees the key activities related to the Endowment Fund through the "IIMA Ahmedabad Endowment Management Foundation". The foundation itself is a Section 8 (Not for Profit) company and provides services such as corpus building, advice on deployment and investment management of the Endowment Fund to the Institute.

Over the last few decades, IIMA has led the way in the country and the region in the domain of management education. Through the Endowment Fund, we hope to support the Institute in continuing this for the centuries to come!

For any queries related to the Endowment Fund, please feel free to write to me at [ceo.endowment@iima.ac.in](mailto:ceo.endowment@iima.ac.in).

# ADIEU - GRATEFUL FOR YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION

By Ajit Motwani (Associate Vice President, Development Office)

**T**hanks so very much for your incredible and unstinted support ever since I was offered the wonderful opportunity in 2014 to establish the IIMA's Development office. No words are enough to express the gratitude that I feel towards Alums for the affection and immense trust reposed in me to help all that the Development Office could ever achieve.

I intended to write this last piece for you special Alums in spring 2020. Covid delayed it! I had plans to leave IIMA last year after the conclusion of the Singapore Chapter fundraising initiative and the first-ever big contribution from a Golden Jubilee batch (1968 – 70). Finally, will now be leaving this beautiful campus and the Development Office by May 2021.

Still vividly remember the Vikram Sarabhai Library's restoration and upgrade project support coming from TCS through Rajesh Gopinathan during 2015-16. Initially, we requested for INR 15 Crore which was immediately agreed but by the time we came to signing the MoU, Institute projected INR 20 Crore which was also generously accepted. The project was finally completed within INR 15 crore and won global recognition through the UNESCO award in 2019.

In 2018-19 we started the discussion with the Singapore Chapter and requested for a single Faculty Wing's restoration and upgrade support. As we went along, the chapter offered to raise more than double the amount through the "1'M for IIMA" initiative. Vidya Vasania and Nayantara Bali, then Chapter President and immediate past President lead the campaign.

Right from the beginning in 2014, with your support, we raised INR 40 Crore during the first year exceeding the previous five decades' donations. This included



launching a new Centre of excellence (India Gold Policy Centre). Glad to be ending my innings with the parting gift of "Centre for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence", close to my heart initiative, supported by an alum who offered me this privilege.

So often you Alums would call to check if Institute needed funds for any significant initiative. When shared our priorities, funding support for those initiatives came immediately either from individual donors or through a batch/group initiative. Even when we were hesitant, you deeply cared and offered that the funds were just a call away.

I am sometimes asked by Alums, colleagues, and recently by the team succeeding me in the IIMA's fundraising drive that how did the Development Office receive large funding to support the diverse initiatives at IIMA. I would say that the tripod learning during three vastly different assignments contributed to laying the foundation. First, my leading a PSU under MHRD taught me how to respect the country laws that would not antagonize Govt Depts and prevent hostilities with one of the key stakeholders; Second, my tenure at IIE New York taught me how to ignite and sustain the philanthropic fundraising across continents and cultures from Fortune 500 and others; last, probably most important but least understood, is the transparency and ethical codes learning during assignments in Scandinavian countries (Norway's Corporate culture and experience during teaching business students at Universities in Finland for core values respected by academia and corporates when they engage with each other).

Definitely hope to remain in touch, I almost connected with many of you as closely as a fellow alum. IIMA has been very special for me and shall remain till the end of days!

# Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad

## GIFT to IIMA FORM

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Complete Address : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone : \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email : \_\_\_\_\_

For IIMA Alumni: Diploma/Certificate \_\_\_\_\_ Programme \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

### Gift Utilization Purpose/Gift Programme/General Donation to IIMA:

I would like to gift undermentioned amount to IIMA for the purpose as above:

Currency: INR/US\$/Euro €/Pound£/ Singapore SGD/others \_\_\_\_\_

Amount : \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose Cheque No. \_\_\_\_\_ dated \_\_\_\_\_ to be used by the Institute.

### Ways to remit funds to IIMA in different geographical regions:

FOR DONORS IN INDIA :	
<p><b>Through Cheque:</b> Cheque payable to "Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad" <b>Mailing Address:</b> Development Office, RJM Auditorium 1st Floor, IIM Ahmedabad, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad-380 015. <b>Email:</b> dean-aer@iima.ac.in and dohead@iima.ac.in</p> <p><b>Donation can also be made online through website :</b> <a href="https://web.iima.ac.in/institute/giving-to-iima-donations/giving-online.html">https://web.iima.ac.in/institute/giving-to-iima-donations/giving-online.html</a></p>	<p><b>Online Transfer :</b> <b>Account Holder:</b> INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AHMEDABAD Current Account Number: 10307641013 <b>Bank's Name &amp; Address:</b> State Bank Of India, IIM Branch, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad – 380 015, India <b>Branch Code:</b> 2653   <b>Swift No.:</b> SBININBB412 <b>MICR Code:</b> 380002019   <b>IFSC Code:</b> SBIN0002653 <b>PAN of IIMA:</b> AAAT11247F <b>Please inform through email to</b> dean-aer@iima.ac.in and dohead@iima.ac.in mentioning the purpose of the donation, PAN information, full name with mailing address and If possible, do attach a screen shot of the transfer.</p>
• Contributions to IIMA are 100% exempt under section 80G of Income Tax Rules, Government of India.	

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<p><b>Through Cheque:</b> The cheques should be drawn in favour of "IIM-A Alumni Association" with a covering letter clearly specifying the purpose of the donation, the full name and the address of the donor: <b>Mailing Address: Tejesh Contractor, 44 Kennedy Ct; Princeton, NJ 08540; USA Winter Park, FL 32792</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Please inform Tejesh Contractor through email <a href="mailto:tejeshc@yahoo.com">tejeshc@yahoo.com</a> with copy to dean-aer@iima.ac.in and dohead@iima.ac.in mentioning the purpose of the donation, full name and mailing address and If possible, do attach a screen shot of the transfer.</li><li>• The contributions would be to 501 c (3) USA (Tax ID No.: 22-3749107) Charity for tax purposes.</li></ul>	<p><b>FOR DONORS ELSEWHERE IN WORLD:</b> To IIMA Foreign Currency Account: <b>Online payment should be made in favour of:</b> <b>Account Holder:</b> INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AHMEDABAD – F.C.Account <b>Current Account Number:</b> 10307641080 <b>Bank's Name &amp; Address:</b> State Bank Of India, IIM Branch, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad – 380 015, India <b>Branch Code:</b> 2653   <b>Swift No.:</b> SBININBB412 <b>MICR Code:</b> 380002019   <b>IFSC Code:</b> SBIN0002653 <b>PAN of IIMA:</b> AAAT11247F</p>
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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



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