Education
The Channel of Change
Dear Alumni,

Tejasvi naavadhitamastu
‘May our learning be radiant’

Thus goes the slogan of IIMB and in an attempt to contribute towards this vision, we bring you the Winter Issue of the IIMB Alumni Magazine that puts the focus lights on Education. Quality Education has been the privilege that we got to enjoy at IIMB and it is very heartening to see many of our alumni contributing to the betterment of the education sector in our country. The cover story of the Magazine will give you insights into the shifts that are taking place in the education scene and how the future of learning could become an enriching experience for our children.

A notable achievement of this year has been the Distinguished Alumni Award – being won by Malavika Harita PGP 82, the first woman ever to bag this coveted award.

The Alumni Office has seen some great activity with three new Alumni Chapters being added to our fleet – Netherlands, US West Coast and Sydney. This makes it 15 chapters for us across India and the world which also means greater connect between the alumni community and the Institute. We also had a very invigorating Alumni-Student engagement initiative Shikshu. The EPGP students of our Institute got the rare opportunity of getting a first-hand experience of how a CEO’s office works. Ten alumni, who work at the top levels of various reputed organizations, came forward to mentor our EPGP students. The students spent a day at the offices of the alumni, attending meetings and interacting with the senior most officials of the offices – a great exposure for our students. Big thanks to the alumni who made this possible!

December is time for friends and fun – and it gets even better ay IIMB with our Reunions. As this Magazine gets published, we will have four PGP batches and the entire EPGP program celebrating their Reunions.

I thank my team at the Alumni Office for their dedicated efforts in taking this Office to greater heights. They certainly have proved that a small team can do wonders.

I wish you all a prosperous New Year and here’s presenting you some good reads for the year end and the New Year. Happy Reading!
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THE CHANNEL OF CHANGE

by Ranjini Sivaswamy
hen Prof. Sugata Mitra carved out a hole in the wall of NIIT Delhi and placed a computer facing the adjacent slum – perceptions about curiosity, faculty and learnability of humankind took an awakening jolt. Children of that massive slum, found their way around to a whole new world of knowledge. They showed they needed nobody’s help to figure out what a computer does, what emails are and what the internet can do. They read newspapers online, downloaded videos, emailed each other, looked up for jobs for their parents and picked up some English along the way. These children taught themselves and taught each other – and they show us what magic an opportunity to learn can create!

There are two things that happened here – one, the children got an access to the world of knowledge and two, they did not have any external force that would hinder their natural curiosity to learn. Access to education and curiosity to learn are the very two foundations of education. And as we have it, these very two are suffering now. On one hand we have a whole lot of people struggling in poverty, not being able to give education to their children and on the other hand, we have a situation that justifies the witty T shirts lines like - “I was born intelligent, education spoiled me”.

Now for India, the question of education holds a lot at stake. From poverty to economic divide to staggering human development needs– we have a huge socio economic problem brewing at the background. Also, we are standing at the best of time in history as the youngest nation in the world – 55% of us are below the age of 35 - a big opportunity, to which we might not rise up to if we falter at the foundation of it all - education.

Antagonists of today’s education system would rather have it all torn down, top to bottom. Conformists refuse to acknowledge the gravity of the issue and refuse to bring about change. But there should possibly be a middle ground – a middle ground that will reassess our ideas and philosophies on what today’s education is, what it is not and what it should be. But until that gets initiated from the side of responsible authorities – it seems like the market has to take care of itself. And in fact, it is preparing to do so.

For instance, ‘Teach for India’ initiative addresses the problem of getting good teachers for people across the country by getting volunteer teachers who are bred at the best of institutes of the country to teach underprivileged children. Another initiative ‘Going to School’ acknowledges the high dropout rates in schools and tries to equip these children with entrepreneurial skills, so that even if we are unable to prevent the drop out, the children will still have the knowhow to build their future. Like these, springing up from the many crises of education are many organizations that address the problem in their own alternative ways.

Some of our alumni themselves have got into the education sector to fix few cracks and leaks. Saumil Majmudar PGP 95 saw that sports education is totally ignored in our schools and went ahead to launch Edusports, an organization that aims to create healthier and fitter children equipped with key life-skills through the magic of sports. Nirmala Sankaran PGP 88 saw the need to demystify the ghost of mathematics in the lives of our children and set up HeyMath!. Navin Kumar PGP 99 was appalled by the lack of adequate skills in our so called well educated youngsters and launched iPRIMED to bridge the skill gap. Janaka Pushpanathan EGMP 13 decided to aid K 12 teachers, Shivoo Koteshwar AMP 3 founded a preparatory school, Geetha Krishnan PGP 93 is contributing to the higher education as an academic and Madhumati Narayanan EGMP 06 is empowering students through mobile education. Through this article, we bring you the thoughts and experiences of these alumni who have seen the education sector hands on. Also, Prof. P D Jose evaluates what education’s new frontiers are and how the current scenario will change.
WE ARE SITTING ON THE BRINK OF A REVOLUTION

Navin Kumar PGP 99

joined a leading IT company straight from campus and went on to spend over a decade with them. I worked in various roles - starting from learning how to make software like a ‘foot soldier’ to managing complex transformational programs, business consulting engagements and finally running a practice. Over the years I got to see the cracks, the mismatch and that we were not making much headway in terms of our long term goals. While the leadership of the organization was holding discussions on topics like ‘non-commoditized, outcome based/ non-linear’ revenue models, the world of our employees revolved around black and white technology skills. There was a huge mismatch as 75% of our employees were ‘foot soldiers’ who were not even capable of tuning into the language spoken by the leadership.

With this, how do we meet our strategic objectives? Changing the employee mix and inducting more experienced and business savvy folks was practically impossible considering the cost and the challenge in finding people with such skills. The solution had to come from within. As I probed this further, I found that the current entry level training/enablement programs were not geared towards creating the more evolved foot soldiers that we need for success. Further probing revealed a much deeper problem – the employees at my company are pretty much the crème de la crème of the country, imagine how appalling the state of the rest of masses would be! It was shocking to know that of the millions of engineers and graduates that the country produces, 80% are not even worthy of getting the basic job in the first place. While I was worrying about the lack of skill inside the organization, most of our graduates are lacking the knowledge as well – it was a double whammy!

I concluded that the genesis of this problem goes back to the 1830s where Lord Macaulay devised an education system with a focus to create “Brown Englishmen”. These men would help operationalize the growing empire by executing the clerical tasks, those for which the native Englishmen would not travel to the country of snake charmers. The curriculum was designed in a way that the focus was on the ‘How’ dimension - i.e. a focus on getting things done under orders without asking questions. There was minimal focus on “Why” and “What” which made the question of ‘why am I doing, whatever I am doing’ disappear from our learning radar. The element of curiosity was defocused as too much curiosity could jeopardize the very existence of the empire. Regrettably, this system happens to be continued until today. It served us fine till the 1980s where the emphasis on services/information/knowledge driven work was low. However, today, with services contributing to 60% of the GDP, this system is faltering and almost threatening to convert

Navin Kumar PGP 99 is the Founder Director of iPRIMED, an organization that is working towards the target of skilling and employing 200,000 graduates and engineers in the next 10 years. Navin and his team are proving that it is possible to create a tertiary education system in India that can produce professionals who can compete and be successful in the global milieu, albeit in a short duration of 2 – 3 months.
the ‘demographic dividend’ to a ‘demographic curse’.

Now this is a colossal problem! I quit my job in the US and came back to Bangalore in April 2009 and one month later started iPRIMED with a single minded focus on enhancing the employability of the youth in the country. Transforming these young adults, in a short duration of 2 – 3 months, was a Herculean task as they were already wired to see the world in a certain way. We needed a magic sauce! We approached the problem from a business/end-user perspective resulting in the creation of a unique learning model that blends multiple skills from the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ buckets. On another note, we avoid using the term ‘soft skills’. To us the so-called soft skills are ‘core skills’; core to a human being irrespective of the function/technology/department/industry they may be working in!

At iPRIMED, learning happens in the context of business, rather than in a purist form. Students go through an immersion, leveraging the principles of learning in an experiential manner. There is 15-16 years of unlearning that has to be done before real learning begins. We try to accomplish this through psychological and behavioural interventions throughout the duration of the program. We simulate the workplace and students are treated like working professionals. Our class rooms are designed like cubicles with 4 – 6 people sitting in a cluster, facing each other with ‘eye ball connect’ rather than seeing the back of each other. No books or hand outs are given – they are nudged to “pull” information from us and from the environment. Through a rigorous programme of skill grooming and nurturing, we have been able to transform the lives of more than 4000 youngsters in the last 4 years of active operation. And our target is to transform and up-skill over 1, 70,000 youngsters in the next 10 years.

The key takers of our model have been the Corporates but now we are entering into partnerships with many government initiatives. It’s heartening to see that the government is keen on up-skilling the youth and empowering them. We are liaising with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) which is tasked with skilling 150 million youth by 2022, we are training providers for the NASSCOM curriculum for the BPO and IT segment, and we teaming up with the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) for skill development in the rural sector.

In our centres at Bangalore, Hyderabad and Indore – we mostly work with students from the Tier 2/3 towns and have had many remarkable success stories. It has been very rewarding to groom people like Mounika, who was the first engineer from her village who went up to work with Accenture; Azhar, who was the first person to venture out of his village to a metropolis like Bangalore, was up-skilled to join Capgemini. These young people from small towns with big dreams have done well and are working at high levels in good companies. Indeed something we are proud of!

From a larger perspective, iPRIMED is trying to solve a grave socio-economic problem. The issue of skill development does not stop at providing employability and economic growth, but goes beyond to encompass issues...
A recent study showed that fifteen-year-old Indians who were put, for the first time, on a global stage stood second to last, only beating Kyrgyzstan when tested on their reading, math and science abilities. India ranked second last among the 73 countries that participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), conducted annually to evaluate education systems worldwide by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Secretariat. The survey is based on two-hour tests that half a million students were put through. Pratham’s 2011 study has reported that despite

THE TEACHER OF THE FUTURE

Janaka Pushpanathan EGMP 13

like regional divide and supremacy issues; urban and rural divide; agrarian and industrial dichotomy; migration and its inherent implications on the social fabric resulting in destabilisation, rise of petty crimes etc. In fact, we have seen some success in reversing the trend of migration by sending a bunch of job seekers from Madhya Pradesh, who had come to Bangalore, back to MP for jobs at Indore – a la “reverse migration”.

We are trying to solve the issues of the mainstream education system by our innovative systems and methods – however, I seriously think that companies like iPRIMED should not exist; it’s actually a shame that we exist. For scale and sustenance, the mainstream has to change and the focus should be on both knowledge and skills. Until this happens, we have to deal with the aspirations and expectations of the youth of our country. They have spent their time and money to acquire various kinds of qualifications, looking forward to progress in life. But a huge majority of them are forced to settle for much lesser returns. With every passing day, these numbers are only increasing and if we do not address this quick enough, we are edging the country to the brink of a revolution.

“I remember one of our board members telling us way back in 2000: Are you sure you will find good quality Math graduates in India? His warning was clear: we had underestimated the difficulty in putting together a team of people who could teach. Sure, math was given huge importance in India, but to find people with a strong understanding of the subject, who could communicate well and teach - was a challenging task. Our premise was that we’d focus on the child, understand his or her skills and then ensure that we tailored our coaching based on that. We didn’t want to spoon-feed the kids. We wanted them to understand the how and why, master skills, and solve problems themselves. And this needed good quality teachers - believe me, that’s incredibly hard to find. Not just in India, anywhere in the world.”

Nirmala Sankaran PGP 88
Founder HeyMath!, an organization that at aims at demystifying Mathematics for students and providing access to good quality maths education.
enrolment rates stacking up at approximately over 95%, reading levels (literacy) of about 53% children who are studying in the fifth grade are only as good as children in the second grade.

I have worked with organizations like British Council and the Fulbright Commission at the Consulate of the United States, helping students pursue higher education opportunities. I was struck by the huge numbers of students who aspired to leave India in search of ‘better’ opportunities in various countries, but I was also concerned that many were not able to make the cut, owing to what most educationists refer to as a ‘lack of a good foundation.’ I felt a deep urge to work in the K12 sector (Primary and secondary education - Kindergarten through twelfth grade) and a strong desire to create meaningful change in our traditional classrooms.

It was then that I met Ujjwal Singh, fellow alumnus of the EGMP 04 batch and a former colleague. Ujjwal is a total techie with remarkable experience of having worked with technology giants like NIIT, Tata Infotech and Hughes Communications in India and the United States. His ideas on technology coupled with my on-the-ground experiences in pedagogy and academics led us to formulate a ‘techademic’ blueprint. With a significant research element built in, we took to market ‘The Curriculum Company’ – as an innovator in the K-12 education space, focused on designing inclusive and easy-to-use solutions for both teachers and children.

As I mentioned, there was significant amount of research that we carried out before starting The Curriculum Company. We named it Project ‘KHOJ’ and focused the study on uncovering gaps in the teaching – learning ecosystem in the K12 space. We thought it was critical to study assessment patterns and implementation of CCE (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation) across different kinds of schools in the country. The research spanned several areas including CCE, training and orientation of teachers, integration of teaching aids/resources and parental support. KHOJ covered more than 100 schools, 2000 teachers, 500 parents, education leaders and 200+ hours of classroom research. Let me run you through some of the most important findings that we uncovered.

Lack of flexibility for teachers - Teachers are challenged with the rigidity in terms of pace and syllabus coverage. The lack of school and parental support in addition to the lack of understanding of the current assessment systems makes life rather difficult for teachers and add to their stress inside the classroom.

Obsolete infrastructure - Educational institutions thought they have invested in the infrastructure but 25% of the teachers surveyed mentioned that the infrastructure provided was obsolete.

Workload an obstacle for teachers to foster creativity in the classroom - Teachers are sometimes compelled to use digital aids like smart boards inside their classrooms. While this may serve as a temporary visual reinforcement for the student, the long terms benefits in terms of concrete learning outcomes are debatable. Sometimes this leads to hampering creativity inside the classroom. Another factor inhibiting creativity is the time taken by the teacher to perform daily assessment tasks, recording and the paperwork related to this. This impacts her ability to devote more time to fostering creativity, thinking of novel and innovative ideas to teach. The overall increase in her workload owing to evaluation requirements, recording results and high student-teacher ratio has made the teacher’s job more challenging than ever before. As a result she is unable to perform to her fullest potential to promote creativity in her classroom.

Consistency & synergy across all teaching, resources and platforms – Majority of the teachers pointed out the difficulty in integrating digital aids and books with the regular curriculum. They struggled to match the material between textbooks, digital medium, projects and practice material.
The teacher of the future will be akin to the timeless Yoda, after all this Jedi Master taught Skywalker the lesson of Life.

Janaka Pushpanathan EGMP 13

Inputs from KHOJ informed our thought processes and we felt that there was a strong growing need for a tool or system that will empower teachers and engage learners at the same time. So we created a unique tablet based teaching and learning tool, so classrooms of today could transform themselves into 21st century classrooms. TCC's technology solutions for schools and colleges comprise the T-learning platform - an end-to-end tablet based classroom management tool that enables teacher efficiency and facilitates a paradigm shift from one to many to 1:1 guided system of learning. T-learning aids in differentiated learning and assessment, thereby helping every student learn at her own pace inside class and at home too. We are already seeing the traditional classroom undergoing the ‘flip’ in cities like Chennai and Chandigarh, where schools have introduced our learning platform, to make learning more relevant to today’s learners.

Technology pushes us to rethink the role of a teacher, to re-conceptualize the process of teaching and learning by digital inquiry, to redefine the structures of our school environments and to reimagine the very DNA of our classrooms. At the heart of the future of learning, is an empowered teacher whose role is more important than ever before, as she unfolds, shares, guides and artfully steers her learners with efficiency and empathy. The teacher of the future then will be akin to the timeless Yoda, after all this Jedi Master taught Skywalker the lesson of Life.

The entire mode and scope of business education is all based on leveraging the intellect towards creating a ‘better’ future. I feel that the body and the wisdom inherent within it, is completely overlooked and as a result, embodied wisdom/operating from intuition is rarely an experience in management education. That has to change.

How...? Well for one, a greater sense of ‘connectedness’ with the planet, with each other, with the subject matter and its relatedness with the world at large would help. This is going beyond the ‘bookish’ and at times, incorrect understanding of emotional intelligence. It is about enabling presence and about having those studying recognising and remembering that state as a way of being.

So... the one thing... having each course and all that is imparted, be held from a space of deep presence. Perhaps a course titled ‘The Art of Presencing’ that dwells on life, sex, death and spirit may allow for an open investigation into the sheer experience of being human.

Rohan Narse PGP 92
MOOCs: A PASSING FAD OR HERE TO STAY?

Geetha Krishnan
PGP 93

Geetha Krishnan PGP 93 is the Director with the Centre for Executive Education at the ISB. He has seven years of experience in advertising and ten years of learning consulting, design and management experience. Over the past few years, he has been keenly observing the emerging scene of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Academia has been known to be remarkably resilient to change. As a wag said, it is perhaps one of only two disciplines (the other known to be oldest and one that shall not be identified here) where per person productivity has remained the same over the years. Now a new phenomenon, MOOCs, is trying to do its version of tilting at the academic windmills.

Technology and education have been reluctant bedfellows for a long time. But the coalition has not been without its supporters. Sample this, from R Buckminster Fuller, circa 1962.

“I am quite certain that someday we will take a subject such as Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, and with the “Einstein” of the subject and his colleagues working on it for a year, we will finally get it reduced down to what is “net” in the subject and enthusiastically approved by the “Einstein” who gave the original lecture. What is net will become communicated so well that any child can turn on a documentary device, a TV, and get the Einstein lucidity of thinking and get it quickly and firmly. I am quite sure that we are going to get research and development laboratories of education where the faculty will become producers of extraordinary moving-picture documentaries. That is going to be the big, new educational trend.”[1]

Mr. Fuller did not put a date to his prediction, but if he had ventured out and said 50 years, he might well have been bang on target, because that’s exactly when the phenomenon called MOOC broke ground, with the New York Times dubbing 2012 the year of the MOOC[2].

Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOC, have evolved over the years, though the self-explanatory term itself was coined only in 2008 by Dave Cormier of the University of Prince Edward Island and Bryan Alexander of the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education.

However, in the intervening 50 years between Mr. Fuller’s prediction and the NYT’s PYT, technology has become a lot more pervasive in learning, both in terms of classroom usage and as a means of self-paced learning. So what is so different about MOOCs?

The underlying credo of self-paced online learning has always been “anytime, anywhere.” While this is intuitively obvious and appealing, it did mean that it moved far away from the academic model of a term-based curriculum. MOOCs, on the other hand, narrowed down the definition of “anytime.” With MOOCs following a time-bound schedule (with flexibility within), they blended the gap between the provider’s (faculty) need for temporal discipline and the receiver’s (learner) need for flexibility. Exceptions to this are the Khan Academy lectures and the iTunes University videos, but they are not quite MOOCs, especially in that they are not quite structured courses.

Most of the computer-based and web-based learning initiatives over the years have been driven by technology companies and new educational institutions. Traditional, established, orthodox institutions were never seen at the front of the line. However, two of the biggest names in the MOOC-world, Coursera and edX, were started by the academic community and institutions of repute in academia. This gives...
the format a higher legitimacy in the faculty community than its technology-centered predecessors.

Continuing with the theme of academic primacy, MOOCs put the faculty at the centre of the course. Video lectures delivered by faculty are the centerpiece in MOOCs, with the other elements, self-reading material, discussions, assignments, and the like, revolving around these videos. This model, apart from endearing itself better with academics, also ensures that the core design of the course stays consistent with the design used in classroom courses.

Staying with the aspect of course design, MOOCs also tend to be under-designed compared to their content-centric e-learning counterparts. Here is one formal definition that sets out the elements of a MOOC.

“…a MOOC integrates the connectivity of social networking, the facilitation of an acknowledged expert in a field of study, and a collection of freely accessible online resources.”[3]

These elements are put together, in a simple combination of video lectures, related reading materials (in various but simple forms), discussion boards and assignment/assessment questions, all of which can be put together by a faculty and his/her teaching assistants, will little need for technology understanding. This, apart from being less expensive to create than classical e-learning products, also enabled the faculty to focus more on the teaching than on the production process.

The Indian Context
Any product or service that promises scale has particular relevance for a populous emerging country like India. Not surprisingly, India has been one of the largest consumers of MOOC, second only to the U.S., but there are only about one-third as many Indian students consuming MOOC as there are American students[4]. However, the average Indian MOOC student is younger than the global average[5]; and as the early adopters spread the word, the numbers are likely to grow, what with India having the largest university-age student population in the world.

On the other supply side, Indian universities and academia have not taken to MOOC with the same fervour – while an IIT Delhi professor offered a MOOC earlier this year on Coursera[6] and IIT Bombay offered a trial MOOC this year with edX[7], Indian institutions have not been active in this area. The approach seems to be that of wait-and-watch, to see if the product finds purchase in the market place and then move in on a mass scale.

So will MOOCs succeed? And in what form?
When the first MOOCs hit the market, enrolments were in tens of thousands, leading to evangelists claiming that a new revolution is in town. However, subsequent numbers have been quite sobering. While all major providers have initial sign-ups that have fast crossed the million mark, completion rates have been hovering around ten percent. While comparisons to classroom dropout rates are not quite fair in that MOOCs are free, the low number either suggests irrational exuberance at sign up or disappointment post.

The revenue model for MOOCs is still up in the air. While Coursera has started offered signature courses where students pay a small sum for certification and Wharton has announced an Executive Education program in a MOOC-like format, most players haven’t quite figured out where the money will come from, apart from the initial funding.

Early evangelists of MOOCs suggested that MOOCs will democratize learning by providing access to world-class education to under-served people across the world. However, recent research suggests that it is the educational elite that are the biggest consumer of MOOCs, with more than 80 percent of MOOC students being undergraduates.[8]

Notwithstanding these early setbacks, it may still be too early to write an epitaph for MOOCs, which some education analysts have already started to do. The avatar of MOOCs could end up finding its place in the academic sun, perhaps not in the form and intent as originally envisaged, but for a new segment, in a new context.

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MAGIC OF SPORTS

The scenario around sports in schools was fairly disappointing. In most schools, there is no curriculum for sports, no daily lesson plans, the teachers do not come prepared for a sports class. In most cases, they just toss a ball at the class of 35 kids and say “go play”. The coaches focused only on the kids who were good in sport. In such a scenario, the kids who are good at sports play and enjoy. The majority who are average or poor tend to switch off from sport.

Also, in many schools with limited space for sport, the sports period was not being conducted at all.

With EduSports, we brought in the best practices of education into sport - inclusion, age-appropriateness and a structure to ensure all children develop a good foundation. We came up with has a structured curriculum with daily lesson plans, age-appropriate props to engage all the children, individualized assessment reports that track each child’s fitness and skill levels – and program monitoring reports for parents & school leaders. Through the magic of sport, children have learnt about teamwork, leadership, dealing with failure, resolving disputes, working hard to succeed and much more.

According to a recent report from a large Venture Capital (VC) firm which analysed the Indian education market, the sector values close to a massive $30 billion. What is fuelling this growth? It’s undoubtedly the increasing demand for quality education and the willingness to spend by the Indian middle class.

According to the Grant Thornton report - Education in India: Securing the demographic dividend - primary and secondary education, or the K-12 sector (Primary and secondary education - Kindergarten through twelfth grade), is expected to reach $50 billion in 2015. Consulting firm Technopark is also very bullish about the growth of the education sector and estimates that private education sector itself would grow to $115 billion by 2018. Technopark sees enrolments in the K-12 level growing to 351 million, requiring an additional 34 million seats by 2018.

Also it is interesting to note that all foreign tier I and II colleges are looking to come to India, thanks to Foreign Educational Institutions Bill (regulation of entry and operations, maintenance of quality and prevention of commercialization) which is currently being debated. This bill will ensure that Ivy League institutes with high repute can open their campuses in India to enhance the quality of mainstream education. This will be due to the experience they have over the years in providing quality education through systems and processes. It’s just not about the presence of foreign universities in India and making quality foreign degree affordable for the larger masses who cannot afford overseas education, but it’s the collaboration with leading universities in India which would make a bigger difference.

My engagement with the education sector began with my volunteering...
to train the summer engineering interns joining the company I worked for. I worked with the students to help bridge the gap from what their syllabus taught to what the industry wanted. This was with the large objective of building, energizing and maintaining a high-quality workforce and helping the students get a corporate connect. This got me inspired to work in the education sector and even after 10 years of working with some leading education groups, I started getting a strong feeling that the education sector is still unstructured and could highly benefit with lessons learnt in the corporate world. Employee engagement, HR practices, soft skills training, goal sheets, customer centricity, metrics to measure performance can become concepts that are imbued into the learning systems itself.

During this time, I was closely associated with the PES Group of Educational Institutions. They had a larger vision of becoming a University and wanted to create professionally superior and ethically strong global manpower. They had also started analysing the students they were taking in every year into their campus. These students were among the top 1000 ranks across Karnataka and more than 4% of them even had centum score in core subjects in their 12th standard. Majority of them were trained to crack an exam but were shaky in their fundamentals or lacked love for learning. This lead to a challenging higher education journey and eventually rocky career. With the larger university and the larger good in mind, the PES group came up with the idea of starting a college preparatory school to create life-long learners in the areas of science, by starting to work with them from grade 6. This could become a feeder to their engineering and Masters Program as well as groom the students to develop into highly skilled human resources with the ability to adapt to an intellectually and technologically changing environment. The PES management wanted someone who was passionate about teaching K-12 students who could influence the end objective and who also can bring the best practices of the corporate to create India’s first college preparatory school. That’s when I moved full time to PES group and I became the Founding Director of “The Amaatra Academy”.

At The Amaatra Academy, teaching pedagogy is a mix of the Gurukul style and the 21st century learning techniques - a good mix of both the worlds. This philosophy helps our teachers transform from being preachers to facilitators. Second, the students shift their focus from learning to understanding. Third, education shift focus from the teaching mind set to one of experiencing and reflecting. All of this enables students to experiment and apply the results in real-life settings.

At the Amaatra Academy, we create a goal sheet which captures the aspiration of the students and parents separately and we work with the child with the parent in fulfilling their aspirations. On the faculty side – teacher competences are mapped, teacher aspirations are recorded, and a competency plan with clearly defined career paths coming to existence. On the student side, a variety of value added initiatives are undertaken which help develop students as well-rounded individuals. “Booster Hour” at the end of every school day helps the students to recap all the concepts that they have learnt during the day. At lower classes, booster hour focuses on strengthening the fundamentals with experiential learning and at higher classes, booster hour focusses on...
preparing for competitive exams. The goal of this program is to ensure students gain a deep understanding of concepts, practice solving complex problems and develop an ability to think and arrive at alternative ways of solving tricky problems. Learning of concepts are imparted through experiments, role-play and games. The students are converted into learners using the elements of fun theory, constructivism learning and experiential learning. We also get the students to meet various personalities – either an alumnus of an institute our students are looking to enrol into, or a popular author, or a faculty of one of the premier science focussed institutes across India. They talk to our students about various topics from their real world experiences.

From my experience what I have seen as the most important aspect of teaching K-12 students is the engagement between student and teacher. I see most schools have their proprietary engagement model of a teacher and student, with is highly student centric. What I think will work for the current state of the education space is a “Give, Take and Match” model between teachers and students - where in some scenarios the teacher role plays as a giver of knowledge; while in some the student is made the key contributor to the teaching cycle through peer learning.

Last two years of working full time in academia gave me an opportunity to meet and discuss macro level problems and solutions with think tanks and policy makers. I look forward to making a bigger impact in the world of education both at primary and higher education space.

If there is one thing that I have learnt in all my years as a parent, manager and teacher, it is the need for me (and for every one of us), to be better listeners. Sadly, not enough is being done at the primary education stage to teach and inculcate sound (pardon the pun) listening habits in children. By the time they reach college and business school (maybe even primary school), it is very difficult, nay impossible, to change listening behaviour and effectiveness.

Start by being a good listener yourself, and encourage your children to be great listeners. We are all born with this innate ability – the System slowly squeezes this talent out of us.

This is also true of reading, speaking and writing. These competencies need to be nurtured, encouraged and honed in early life, and deeply ingrained in our operating systems, so to speak. And while doing so, insist that the highest standards are set and achieved – do not settle for less. Other ‘subjects’ are best and easily learnt once the basic communications skills are in place. I hope you are listening!

Prof. Bringi Dev PGP 78
Madhumati Narayanan
EGMP 06

Today’s students, the “Gen Z” - the young and not-yet-adults, have never known a life without the internet, computers and mobile phones. For them, socializing and learning coexist and their learning requirements are changing rapidly. These students are ‘Digital Natives’; born to a world fortified by internet technology; gotten accustomed to instant action and gratification. With temperaments that are set to instant responsiveness, the one question that students of today ask is “Why can’t I learn what I want to learn when I want to learn?” There is an absolute need to look beyond conventional learning methods towards more aggressive learning solutions. In other words, we should put the student in the driver’s seat. That kind of ease and access comes naturally with mEducation – or mobile education.

mEducation gives technology enabled learning solutions available to users anytime, anywhere on any portable connected device - a laptop, tablet or mobile phone. It represents a profound shift in the way education is delivered and received. McKinsey says “mEducation simplifies access to content and experts, overcoming traditional constraints of time, location and collaboration”. It is just starting to boom world over and in India.

It’s more than 15 years now that I have been working with students - especially teenagers and youth. I realized over the years, especially for a nation like ours, that learning has to become “convenient, affordable and accessible”. Besides, as we know, tier 2 and 3 towns and cities have very little teacher infrastructure. But it is also a fact that these towns and cities have aspiring students in abundance. In a way a student from Dharwad or Karur is fighting an uneven battle with students from Kota and New Delhi when they sit for a JEE. Thanks to the extensive Mobile penetration in the country we have an opportunity to leverage mEducation which can become a huge leveller. It was with this thought, that I founded MPower Learning Solutions – a mobile based learning solutions provider for test preparations and employability enhancement.

At MPower, we started producing lessons for a focus group of 14-25 year olds across the country. We came up with ‘5 minute learning lessons’, for today’s learners who want to learn more in less time.
(Attention deficit is huge amongst today’s learners.) The 5 minute learning videos help learners to understand various concepts. They use the videos for pre-read, review after classes at school/college as a reinforcing tool. We also offer full courses for JEE mains for 11th and 12th standard students and a finishing school product called ‘Campus2corporate’. Courses are available for access on PCs through the windows 7/8 app and on android devices. You don’t need high end smart phones to access the learning content, basic phones are all the students need, making learning highly accessible and affordable.

Moving forward, my focus is to work on the ‘flipped learning’ model where the responsibility of learning is shifted to learners.

Towards solving the massive problem of education in India, technology seems to be the best bet forward. The positives are that we have a strong hand in technology and that we have made some inroads through mobile penetration to connect the population. This definitely seems like a great place to start with. To take things forward, we will need entrepreneurs, thought leaders and of course the government to re-toil the turf of education and sow seeds that are of better quality. May the tilling begin!
The twentieth century model of the educational sector characterised by intense faculty–student interactions in a brick and mortar class room is changing to one of need based and asynchronous exchanges in a virtual space. Even more important, with the rapid rate of change, education is no longer seen as a one-time shot at a secure job but rather a lifelong activity to cope with changing demands of the workplace. How does this change the landscape of higher learning and what implications does this have for the educational marketplace?

The forces that are driving this change include: increasing globalisation (fiercely competitive domestic and international student markets); greater global mobility (of academics, students and academic brands); an intensifying clamour for democratisation of knowledge and access; and the emergence of disruptive digital technologies that drive innovations and offer leapfrogging opportunities.

Consider the impact of globalisation on the education sector. In 2010 an estimated 3.6 million students were enrolled in tertiary education in countries abroad. By some estimates the numbers will reach 20 million by 2020. An intense competition exists between the universities in North America, Australia and UK for a share of this pie. Paradoxically, despite these large numbers, a vast majority of those aspiring to complete higher degrees will not have access to high quality education. For universities in most parts of the developing world, high quality faculty and other academic and physical infrastructure are scarce resources.

That education needs to be more accessible as well as affordable is a widely held consensus. Given the limitations on key resources - both financial and technical - there was little clarity on how this can be achieved. Current advances in digital technology and telecommunications have greatly resolved that conundrum. Use of online digital technology in the educational space, shrinks physical distances and improves scale economies. It enables a learner in a remote area of sub-Saharan Africa to audit a course at an Ivy League school armed with just a laptop and an internet connection. The high entry barriers to a world class education – prior academic performance, finances and visa requirements – have been overcome using the fibre optic cables that link Africa to the world. The consequence? Higher education is democratised and will not continue to
remain the preserve of the well-heeled or the brainy.

Developments highlighted above have important implications for the universities of the future. Successful universities of the future will not be limited by physical spaces or contracts. University learning spaces will be built collaboratively by traditional educational institutions, non-academic subject experts, technology entrepreneurs and investors. Universities may still continue to be venerated as temples of learning but will also be equally driven by financial returns and business models as investment requirements rise.

BLACKBOARDS TO KEYBOARDS - THE EARLY EVOLUTION

While distance learning is rather old, online learning is of recent vintage. In the last few years online education has rapidly evolved winning new converts even among the skeptics. From a niche delivery channel for content delivery it has been rapidly main-streamed creating wider access to education, new markets for content and expanded revenue opportunities for academic institutions. An early success story was that of Universitas21 which created a consortium of several top schools across the globe to offer a customised curriculum and certification.

Recent initiatives have been more diffused both in terms of ownership, offerings and service delivery. When Salman Khan, a hedge fund analyst, posted a few math tutorials on the net to tutor a family member, he could not have imagined the revolution he was unleashing. To date, statistics are: 300 million+ lessons delivered, 1.4 billion+ exercises done, 5100 instructional videos, 100,000+ practice problems and ten million unique visitors per month. With sponsorships Khan Academy is now looking at expanding teaching faculty, introducing new content through crowd-sourcing and developing curricula to blend the content with traditional learning systems.

In 2000, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) founded Open Course Ware Project with funding from alumni. Initially populated with rather sketchy information on 50 courses, it has today grown to cover virtually all of MIT’s courses and averages one million visits per month and totalling 125 million visitors. The open course ware consortium now has a worldwide community of hundreds of higher education institutions and associated organizations committed to advancing open education and its impact on global education.

ON-LINE TO MASSIVELY ONLINE – FROM EVOLUTION TO REVOLUTION

An experimental offering by Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig at Stanford University in 2011 is generally accepted as the first born among the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). By providing blockbuster courses and star faculty from Ivy League institutions free or at a fraction of what it would cost otherwise to students globally, MOOC paradigm disrupts the traditional economics of higher education. Udacity, an outcome of the Stanford experiment, boasts of a million enrolments for over thirty courses taught by university professors and industry executives from Google, NVIDIA, Microsoft and Autodesk. Two of its best known alternatives, Coursera (100 universities, 500 courses and 19.1 million course enrolments from 190 countries) and edX (non-profit initiative co-founded by MIT and Harvard) have also grown into ultra large networks. Elsewhere, the Open Educational Resources University (OERu) -supported by UNESCO and managed by the Newland based Open Resource Network Foundation -provides students worldwide the option of free education using open access materials and even get “credible credentials.” FutureLearn, a free, open, online platform established by the Open University of UK in 2012 also offers courses from multiple universities and other leading organisations.

BLENDING THE MODELS - NEXT GENERATION ON-LINE

With an eclectic mix of investors, edupreneurs, technologists and a highly social networked, digitally fluent and tech savvy student population, education is at an inflection point and “quickly becoming the next hot sector for innovation.” Six emerging trends characterise the next generation of innovations in this sector. These include use of newer technology tools to provide a personalised learning experience, co-option of new firms which have not been traditionally in the education sector, blended models that integrate latest instructional methods with traditional ones, increased focus on open access materials, creating credible certification methodologies and attempts at monetising these emerging models.
Education has become a lifelong activity and learners are looking to customise their experiences to suit their needs. New technology is aiding this transition. Openlearning.com, based in Australia is both collaborative and social, a combination of Wikipedia and Facebook. Knewton, one of Fast Company’s Most Innovative Companies in 2012, leverages on the fact that “education sector is the most data-minable of all industries.” Every interaction between a school and the student produces copious data from attendance, to grades. Using advanced data mining techniques Knewton can map student proficiency at a concept level, allow for real time ‘adaptive tutoring’ and content personalisation. With 10 million students expected to enrol by the end of the year the company aims to be the “Amazon Web Services of online education.”

These emerging breed of organisations can transform the educational market place by acting as complimen tors that add more vale to the university offerings or substitutes that replace the existing institutions. FutureLearn has co-opted three non-university partners - the British Museum, the British Council and the British Library - in addition to its 26 University partners. Peer2Peer University (P2PU) established in 2009 promotes experimentation in open learning and peer-led education by allowing any member to design and create an educational course, which can then be taken by anyone in the online community. Udemy, founded in 2010, allows anyone to offer any course for a fee or for free. With nearly 1 million students and 8000 courses Udemy makes entrepreneurs out of its faculty which includes best-selling authors, CEOs, celebrities, and Ivy League professors. Other initiatives to mass-cast the university experience through partners include Stanford on iTunes - an archive of audio and video content from across the university.

Interestingly the disintermediation of players in the education space reflects what we have earlier experienced in the music, news and retail sectors. In education, traditionally, content was created by academics/researchers, quality assured by peer groups and delivery managed through university owned platforms. What new forms of organisations would emerge when this tight linkage is broken? The emerging technologies allow for both co-option and collaboration between academic and non-academic players on a scale that was not feasible before. As power shifts away from content creators to content aggregators and to new market makers, more value will be captured by the latter. Academics are well aware of this. Consider the example of academic publishers repackaging scholarly work produced at university expense and then selling them back to universities at a high price.

Increasingly these pioneers are either supplementing or at times even substituting university offerings. Armed with content and supported by early adopters in schools and universities these players are now attempting to ‘flip’ the learning model – with lecturing done outside the classroom and homework done during school time. Similar approaches are also being experimented elsewhere. TED-Ed, the educational spin off from TED has carefully collated educational videos, in a collaborative effort between talented educators and animators. The “flip this video” option on the site allows instructors to turn a video into a customized lesson with added context, questions and follow-up suggestions.

The heightened emphasis on open access materials to reduce student costs and democratize access has spawned new alliances and business models. One approach is to take advantage of Creative Commons-licensed open educational resources. The Open Educational Resources (OERu) a consortium of institutions across five continents uses course material drawn from open access sources. Boundless, an OERu start-up, offers digital textbooks along with an app complete with flash cards and quizzes for relatively low prices. Coursera’s partnership with Chegg, a student hub for educational tools and materials, and top educational publishers including Cengage, Macmillan, Oxford University Press, Sage, and Wiley, allows students free access to prescribed textbooks during the course.

Several vexing issues related to certification and accreditation of non-university led programmes remains. However new options are emerging for those seeking formal degrees. Coursera uses a Verified Certificate system to authenticate that a student has completed the course. At iVersity, the German MOOC platform, enrolment is free and there are plans to create an online market place for academic credits by leveraging the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). iVersity organizes the teaching and assessment and awards ECTS points on behalf of its partner universities. In the US, Georgia State University and University of Maryland propose to grant prior learning transfer credits for those who qualify through an exam or interview. The State University of New York is also considering allowing up to a third of the credits for some of its degree programmes to come from outside institutions, including MOOCs.
Degreed, launched nearly 2013 is so far the most audacious attempt to delink degrees and institutions. The company aims to ‘jail break’ the degree scores and validates one’s lifelong education from both accredited and non-accredited sources. Degreed manages this by giving a score to university degrees and online courses alike using an online service that tracks, scores and validates all of a user’s educational experiences. Other commendable initiatives include those by Accredible and Mozilla Badges.

The toughest question however, relates to the financial viability of these emerging models. Innovation has been the hallmark here too. Udemy’s revenue sharing model allows the teacher to retain 100 percent of the fees from students they recruit and a 50 percent share in the revenues from Udemy’s leads. Given the large number of registrations, the potential financial rewards are high. According to Udemy its 10 most popular teachers have earned a grand total of $5 million dollars from student fees. Udacity’s attempts to monetize their offerings by providing value added services such as a personal coach for detailed feedback, personal tutorials, project guidance, and a completion certificate. With many courses at Udacity and edX being designed and delivered by industry professionals this could also be a cost effective and appropriate option for corporates with specific training requirements. Open Learning uses a public-private model wherein public courses are free while students pay for the private ones. The OERu allows free enrolment but charges a small fee to have the student’s work assessed for academic credit if and when required. That these credits are recognised by all partner universities increases their appeal.

THE NEW FRONTIERS: A FEW ANSWERS AND MORE QUESTIONS

Many challenges still remain. While the issues related to content delivery has generally been resolved, quality remains a concern given that no assurance and certifying mechanisms exist that guarantee the inputs (quality of the education) and the output (the quality of graduates). Given that some platforms currently allow uncontrolled access to any one for offering courses also accentuates this problem. Further, the effectiveness of learning in an online environment is still questionable. Some estimates put the dropout rates for MOOCs as high as 90 percent or more. Given this, are the impacts on the university system overstated?

How will potential recruiters view such self-directed education? Will employers favourably look at candidates with several highly focussed online courses on their resume as compared to a traditional university graduate with a conventional 3-4 year course? Who certifies the quality of the programmes and the graduates? The Direct-to-Profile Certifications program, introduced by LinkedIn in partnership with Coursera, edX, Pearson, Udacity and others attempts to address this by allowing individuals to display professional credentials obtained from the partners on their LinkedIn profiles, increasing the value of the courses to students as well as potential recruiters.

Will the early movers who dominate the online educational standards drive education to socially suboptimal outcomes? Increasingly worries about a new generation of education dominated by a North American perspective are being voiced. Some argue that MOOCs could enforce an unprecedented level of global homogeneity in higher education.
“MOOCs mean the homogenisation (and in this case the Americanisation) of knowledge, learning and culture.”

What happens to institutional branding assiduously built over the decades when these brash young organisations corner the glory and the cash? For example, many Coursera courses are offered by Stanford faculty using university resources. However the credit and often branding benefits flow to Coursera. Universities are now attempting to pull back and take greater control over their brands and offerings. Stanford’s decision to start using Open edX, the open-source platform developed collaboratively with Google, is a first step in this direction. Recently Duke withdrew from semester online - an education consortium of top US universities that proposed to offer courses for credit - due to faculty concerns about the negative potential impacts on university finances and faculty recruitments.

So what will the future be like? There are several possible pathways to transformation. As the connect between a formal classroom learning, education and degrees unravels, new leaders will emerge. Google and Amazon with their unrivalled access to content and mastery over technology, could become the nextivy League universities. Corporate-academic partnerships will form an increasing part of the university experience. Increased collaboration between universities will permit students to simultaneously take several courses from multiple organisations and get them certified at any school of their choice. An increased customisation of degrees, tailored to fit individual needs, may become inevitable. The roles of the professor will transition from one of teaching to mentoring.

How can traditional universities face the more dynamic and flexible forms of learning that emerging? What would it take for them to arrest their decline and even leverage this change? In jockeying for the share of the mind and the wallet of students a key challenge for educational institutions will be to cut the right deal with the right partners — one that protects the brand and allows the capture of a reasonable share of the value created. To manage the coming revolution, and remain relevant universities will need to reinvent themselves.

REFERENCES
[5] There are several more but as they are discussed in detail elsewhere in this issue, they have not been highlighted here. For a more complete list see http://www.mooc-list.com/

[14] Introducing A New Way to Add Certifications to Your LinkedIn Profile http://blog.linkedin.com/2013/11/14/introducing-a-new-way-to-add-certifications-to-your-linkedin-profile/
IIMB ranked top B School

IIMB has bagged the top place among business schools in the Central Asia Region in the Eduniversal Awards based on Deans’ Vote Survey. Dr Devanath Tirupati, Director-in-charge, IIMB, received the award from Dr Aneeta Madhok, Member, ISC, Eduniversal, France. The Award was given away at the 6th Eduniversal World Convention held at IIMB from Oct 9 – 12, 2013.

Echoes at IIMB

“We can create excellence only through equality. India is not able to produce Nobel Prize winners because there are many castes and many groups in India that are yet to receive education. Education to me should respect not just the so-called cerebral area but the intelligence of the body. I’d like to see a redefinition of intelligence.” – U. R Ananthamurthy, eminent writer, scholar and cultural critic, recipient of the Jnanpith Award and the Padma Bhushan, at the 40th Foundation Day of IIMB.

“Your dreams are fresh. Before you become willing to compromise in the name of pragmatism, you should become the change we all hope to see,” Padma Shri Kamal Haasan, at Vista 2013, IIMB’s popular business fest.
Malavika Harita PGP 82 wins Distinguished Alumni Award 2013!

The bindi-wearing, soft-spoken advertising ace – Malavika Harita became the first woman to win the Distinguished Alumni Award of the Institute.

Prayaas 2013

The EPGP students of IIMB organized Prayaas, the annual event that is aimed at contributing to the needy. A Medical camp that provided free Jaipur Foot and a Free Vittal Eye camp were the highlights of the event.

New Alumni Chapters

US West Coast, Netherlands and Sydney get mapped on the IIMB alumni network with Alumni Chapters launched in the cities. Get connected with fellow alumni in your international locations. The office bearers of the new chapters are: US West Coast Chapter: President - Venu Kotamaraju PGP 02, Secretary - Hazarasingh Siviya PGP 93, Treasurer - Sandhya Krishnamurthy PGP 02. The office bearers of the Netherlands Chapter are: President - Saket Gulati PGP 01, Secretary - Amal Gupta EGMP 08, Treasurer - Abhishek Mittal PGP 11. The Office bearers of the Sydney Chapter are: President - Gerry Pacheco PGP 86, Secretary - Satyavrat Sharma GMITE 08, Treasurer - Biju Joy PGP 99.

Shaurya – Alumni, Students & Sports!

Shaurya – the annual sports at IIMB meet between its alumni and students was two days of great fun. The games closed with both teams on a tie. The students retained the trophy by virtue of being the defending champions.

40th Foundation Day

IIMB celebrated its 40th Foundation Day celebrations with Prof. U R Ananthamurthy delivering the Foundation Day Lecture.
**Coke Studio @ IIMB**

Amit Trivedi and his team of musicians enthralled the audience at IIMB at the Coke Studio Concert organized by the Unmaad team of IIMB.

**Remembrance**

Students of IIMB lit candles after taking an oath of integrity in memory of Manjunath Shanmugam, an IIM Lucknow alumnus and IOCL Sales Manager, who lost his life fighting the oil mafia in Uttar Pradesh on November 19, 2005.

**Samarpan - Joy of Giving Week**

IIMB celebrated the Joy of Giving Week with an array of events that inspired joy in the act of giving.


**One day @ IIMB**

- The gates of IIMB opened for the public to experience how a day unravels at the Institute.

**‘Make a Wish Tree’**

A tree festooned with wishes of children saw an overwhelming response at the institute to fulfil those wishes.

**Twaran 2013**

IIMB organized its annual community run in solidarity with the Joy of Giving Week. Apart from the run at campus, we saw our alumni coming forward to organize the event in Mumbai and Delhi.

**Alumni mentor EPGP students**

The EPGP students of our Institute got the rare opportunity of getting a first-hand experience of how a CEO’s office works. Ten alumni, who work at the top levels of various reputed organizations, came forward to mentor our EPGP students. The students spent a day at the offices of the alumni, attending meetings and interacting with the senior most officials of the offices – a great exposure for our students. Big thanks to the alumni who made this possible!
A physics graduate, an MBA, a career woman, a mother and now an artist; it has been a mix of planned and unplanned series of choices. After passing out from IIM-B in 1997, I enjoyed the busy, demanding and exciting life of the corporate career. Juggling work with married life was without any doubt thrilling. But then I guess I was looking for another kind of thrill. I changed gears of my speeding life and left my career to raise my two boys. When I left my career, I knew what I was giving up. It was a difficult decision and for the first few months, not a day went by when I seriously questioned it. However, ‘time’ came to my rescue and I slowly got into the rhythm of this new way of life. It fitted like a second skin, and soon enough came a time, when the first thing in my introduction about myself was that I was a mother of two. This came naturally with a silent hint of pride and a smiley at the end of the sentence. Before I realized, nine years flew by, sometimes like a tornado but mostly like a gentle breeze.

However, a part of me that was dormant all this while started to
Nirbhaya, O brave one,
You have suffered and fought for everyone's grief,
On the bed of the distant clouds, my love,
You lie now, and forever rest in peace.

Sleep well, my dear,
Free from all the worldly plight,
Be our guide from up there, our angel,
Shower us with your effervescent light.

We take the baton from your tired soul,
To fight for our respect and courage,
Never again will we give that right to anyone,
We, the women, take this solemn pledge.

The gentleness of our nurturing souls,
Will transform into “Goddess Durga”,
For every demon in this wilderness of life,
In each of us will be reborn, a new Nirbhaya.

wake up from its slumber and
quietly re-ignited an internal battle.
My upbringing has instilled in me a
sense of who I am and what I want
for myself as an individual. To me this
individuality is more than a tag of who I
am with respect to others, but it is, who
I am and what do I want. I realized
that it was time to change gears
again. However this time, instead of
being bound by the constraints of a
corporate career, I chose the path that
I was passionate about and that could
give me complete freedom to express
my thoughts and emotions creatively.
So in this new and exciting phase
of my life, I once again re-introduce
myself to the world as ‘Asmita-the
Thinking Artist’.

Like many others, I started painting
as a hobby. Exactly when this hobby
became a passion, I do not know.
But I am glad that I discovered it and
showed the courage to pursue it. As
they say, it’s never too late. It was
in 2012, that I started creating my
original work. Since I am not a trained
artist, I had to struggle a lot with the
creative process. This was often
dishheartening and discouraging.
However, slowly but surely I became
comfortable, found my style, and
started becoming more confident and
dearer.

My first series of paintings was based
on women, a topic which has always
been close to my heart. Though
the role of a woman has changed
over the centuries, deep down the
inherent qualities that truly represent
womanhood across the world remain
the same. Through these paintings,
I tried to bring out the three most
important attributes, that according to
me, define the soul of a woman – her
Beauty, Love and Inner strength, and
hence the title, “Ribbons, Roses and Rocks”. With these fifteen paintings, I had my first solo exhibition in New Delhi on March, 2013.

One unique aspect about my artwork is that for each of my painting, I write a poem that narrates the central theme of the painting. These poems are emotional and heart-felt and are as important as the painting itself. I have compiled some of these poems into my first poetry book titled ‘Ribbons, Roses and Rocks- An ode to women’. Currently I am working on getting my second book of poetry published.

Painting is my way of giving expression and form to my ideas, opinions and views. My mind is constantly observing, absorbing, assimilating and analyzing everything around me. Through my paintings, I try to bring to life my interpretations on canvas, which are rich in colours, emotions and human sensitivities. Since the thought or the concept is the main driving force behind my paintings, I do not start my work on canvas without first having clarity on the idea. My art has elements of symbolism. Every object in my painting, even the colours used, convey a specific meaning. Through this I try to engage the viewer more intellectually in the process of appreciating my art.

2013 has been a good year for me. In addition to having my first exhibition, one of my paintings, “The Woman and the Man”, was selected by the jury of The International Emerging Artists Awards, in the “Best Picks of 2013” Category. I was invited by the Global Art Agency to participate in the ‘Vienna Showcase’, an International Exhibition of Contemporary Art, held at Palace Schonbrun in Vienna in October, 2013. My work was appreciated by fellow artists and the visitors. In spite of the presence of Indian elements in my art, most of my viewers could appreciate the context and were able to relate to the stories behind my paintings. I won the Second Place in “The Best Vienna Showcase Awards-2013” amongst 140 artists from 54 different countries. This was really unexpected and overwhelming.

I strongly believe in creating art with a meaning. Each of my work has a story behind it. I want to create art that not only looks great on the wall, but can become an integral part of the person’s life and value system. It is my firm belief that each one of us has a thinker, philosopher and spiritual guru within us, but remains hidden because of our stressful and busy lives. It is my dream that my art can bring out this shy thinker, philosopher and spiritual guru from each of us. It is my vision to create art that attempts to transport the viewer from their comfort zone into a contemplative frame of mind, in order to question, challenge, and appreciate, what we, the Homo sapiens society, bring onto ourselves and to the others – The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.

My life as an artist and a poet is very fulfilling. It lets me be whatever I want to be. It gives me complete freedom to express what I want to and how I want to. I get goose bumps when a concept starts to take shape in my mind and feel tremors of excitement when I see a blank canvas. What more can one ask for!
The Stepchild

Alone in the corner, the Stepchild waits,  
Hoping against hope, for the darkness to fade  
But the life goes on, with its busy grinding churn,  
The Stepchild sits alone, quietly waiting for its turn.

Wrapped in your life, trapped in its maze,  
You give yourself in, to a never-ending chase,  
You do everything, that the world expects of you,  
Your family, your friends, and sometimes strangers too.

And then you are left with nothing, nothing more to give  
So far away have you gone, that there’s nothing left to feel  
For that child who is abandoned, who’s always left behind,  
The one who always waits, for a tiny grain of your time.

You ignore, you mistreat, you stopped caring long ago  
You forgot to remember, the existence of that tiny soul  
So busy, so tired, you have no moments, not even a few  
For that lonesome little soul, the Stepchild that is You.

Only You

In the arms of his mother, with back turned to his toys  
Clinging to her tightly, he whispers, this little boy

He says,  
“All my favourite toys together  
Do not give me the love that I get from you  
O Mother, my dear mother  
All I really need is Only You”

Curving and tilting sharply, to give comfort and hear his laughter  
She stands unwavering, enduring the pain of awkward posture

To her baby she says,  
“In this journey of my existence  
Whatever life brings to you  
For the rest of my life, my love  
I’ll always be there for ‘Only You’
The Breadwinner

What does it take for a woman
To step out of her zone
To earn a living for her family
To provide her kids a safe home
I see instead of a halo, there is a Chakravyuh

She has to conquer it every day, for her life to simply get through
This is a testimony to her strength, for she has become a breadwinner
For the ends to simply meet, and her valley to become greener
Despite the cruel hardships, her posture is one so brave
She has taken control of her destiny, and now she just won’t fail

The Journey called Love

What is love if not a journey
With small ripples and plenty big waves
The beginning, if not marked with friendship
Cannot carve the path ahead
Along this great adventure
Lie delicate threads of discoveries
Of self, the other and together
That weaves many soulful memories
Like friends if sail along
The love will rise and shine
It will prevail when youth is gone
And will stand the test of time
**Myriad Hues**

She has more facets than one  
She does more than she can, for everyone  
She brings hope, joy and life to her dear ones  
In return she swallows the dark from their cauldron  
The day and night that covers her soulful face  
Are the gifts from life to her to treasure always  
The colours that paint her face are your cues  
They tell the story of her ‘Myriad Hues’

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**The Guru**

Like clay in the hands of a sculptor  
You mould our precious little ones  
Holding them gently yet firmly  
You turn them into golden stars and suns  
You teach on the Veena  
The music of love and life  
You transcend the simplicity  
Through the purity of the white  
The Lotus that surrounds you  
Bless them with true knowledge  
You are their Guru, their strength  
And their eternal mount of courage  
You inspire them, encourage them  
Make them better than their own selves  
You are for everyone on this Earth  
The Saraswati incarnate
As I ran last year’s Kaveri Trail Marathon, I felt a drag on my shoes & looked down, wanting to remove the clogged root, till I realized it was a part of my sole. Bye, Bye, my beloved Brooks. I wonder how I will frame my first ever running shoes! It stayed with me for over 7 years. I ran my first half in it, had 2 babies since, took a break from serious running & sprang back to my second race & a few more since then.

It’s the shoe that made me realize... life is celebrated with the memories you build, not the last moments of agony & separation. Is it that perhaps today, after 7 long years, I’ve finished grieving for my mom, now that I understand her life was far more important than her passing.

It’s the shoe that made me remember... the beauty of first love, the conviction that this will last forever, the absolute comfort of being with somebody you can vibe with completely, of slipping your feet into something that fits you like a second skin.

It’s the shoe that made me understand... my failings are all my own, my pace is a result of my training. There are no scapegoats in life but yourself.

It’s the shoe that stuck with me... for 7 years, 5 races, 2 babies & everything else in-between. It’s a shoe that stayed a silent spectator... to my innumerable doubts & soul-searching, as I clawed my way up to last woman finisher in Auroville, It didn’t judge me when I stopped, didn’t applaud me when I finished. It simply stood by me like a rock.

42.2, is no small feat. It’s no small goal. But when you finish it, almost everything seems possible. The hurt, the endurance, the will, the cramp, the sweat - all become worthwhile and you are born again. Usha Raikar and Sourav Mukherji, who’ve braved the 42.2, take you along in their passion for running. Get inspired. Get running!
It's the shoe that made me realize…
How much more beautiful the journey than the pursuit of a goal.
When I simply enjoy each day's grind, the nitty-gritty of building a team,
the detailing of a solution, the beauty of putting a process together,
the end is perhaps the most boring, crossing the finish line,
waiting for the next race.

It's the shoe that made me a runner & for that I'm forever in debt...
Today I understand failure, strength & spirit,
Am I more beautiful or am I stronger?
I am more beautiful for my wonderfully misshapen toes & my sun-freckled face,
I am stronger simply cos I stay on the track longer to be among the last finishers…
WHY DO I RUN?

Prof. Sourav Mukherji FPM 2000
For the past two years, I have been running with a group called Runners High in Bangalore, training for long distance running. I did my first full marathon in September 2012 at KTM (near Mysore). Here is a recollection of my experience running my second full marathon in January 2013, in Mumbai.

Life was supposed to get tough at 35 K, when you start climbing the triple hump of Peddar Road. There were two saving graces – the tall houses on two sides were providing shades and I have been preparing for this, for months. If it goes up, it has to come down – so the pain is just temporary. My aim was not to walk, but slow down so that I have enough left in the tank to complete the run. A little boy by the side of the road shouted “uncle chocolate”. I thanked him and moved along noticing the utter disbelief in his eyes, ‘if the old fellow is not running for chocolates, then what is he running for?’ The Porsche showroom on my left, the French consulate on my right, the cheering crowd, stretched hands with peeled oranges, water in small bottles of Kingfisher (that’s all that is left of the airlines?) were blurring past as every muscle in my leg and oodles of optimism in my mind worked in harmony to leave Peddar road behind. I was getting a feeling of home stretch.

A turn took me back into Worli sea face – and then it hit me! The sun shone straight into my eyes, ‘if the old fellow is not running for chocolates, then what is he running for?’ The foregone chocolates, fries and sweets, ten loops on my own at IIMB, 25 K in zero degree Paris. I knew that everything would ring hollow if I am not able to run the remaining distance, which by that time, had dwindled to about 3.5. The thought of my training made my mind drift, away from my pains, away from my weary fellow runners, away from the sun and I could just about summon enough energy to keep moving my feet. Why do I run? Because unlike in real life, marathon running has a very fair input-output ratio. The amount of discipline and hard work that you put in shows up as better timing, lesser injuries and more enjoyable runs. I know I have given my best during the past three months, therefore I will make Mumbai give it back to me.

As these images flooded my mind, I was part of something that they were shouting for, I was a contributor in some insignificant way to the joy that they might be feeling that morning. I gave high fives to street children, doffed my cap to acknowledge the smiles of pretty ladies (even though their smiles were for someone running in front or behind me), saw a surrealistic sunrise running across the sea link and almost joined a sardarji for an impromptu bhangra before realizing that it was not part of my race plan, appreciated the graceful strides of the elite runners as they zipped past, greeted many known and unknown half-marathoners as the two trains of runners crossed each other – a lifetime of running experience packed into a capsule of four hours.

Come to think of it, Mumbai had already given it back to me several times over. A weather that facilitates one’s romance with running, a terrain that propels you forward rather than challenging you, a course that it so diverse that it keeps your mind busy and above all the sea of humanity lined on both sides of the road that never allows you to feel that you are doing this all by yourself, for yourself.

Who are they standing there since early morning on Sunday? Who are they shouting for, who are they greeting? Maybe they had their spouses, parents or children among the runners but that still does not explain why they were hanging on for such a long time. I was sure that I was not their hero, they were not shouting for me even though I felt that I was part of something that they were shouting for.
were approaching the end. With her. The boards indicating the delight of the onlookers – they clapped soon became a near-sprint. Paroma was flying ahead of me much to the family – unfortunately the TV channel had not obliged. I tried to shout, telling her I have finished my second marathon, and was in great shape (the endorphins were just kicking in), but words deserted me for the next 30 seconds. As tears streamed down my eyes (post AamirKhan’s TV show, I no longer feel embarrassed about crying in public) the gentleman who lent me his phone asked “tears of joy, I presume?”

My eleven year old nephew, with whom I had stayed in Mumbai had asked me the night before the marathon “uncle, are you going to win?” My friend and I had tried to explain to him in vain why I was running 42.2 kms when I knew I had no chance of finishing within even the top hundred. To others (adults) I have often found it difficult to explain why I was travelling to Mumbai to run when I professed that I was running for the joy of it and not really for any results (‘don’t you get enough joy running in Bangalore?’). During the past fifteen months, ever since I seriously started to train for long distances, my family has got around to accepting this parallel life that I have started to live – sometimes with admiration, but most of the time with patience and tolerance. Do we really know why 3000 of us took to the road on 20th morning at 5:40 hrs, knowing that our bodies will be battered covering the next 42.2 kms, but there would hardly be anything to show for our efforts apart from our convoluted walks and swollen body parts. Yet we run, yet we get high every time we think of it. While the human mind is programmed to seek a reason for everything that we do, it is difficult to pinpoint a reason for many things we do. Running, for me, is one of them. Running, for me, is one of the most important things we do. Running, for me, is one of the most important things we do.

Finally I finished – there was no tape to breast, no garlands, no applauses but strangely I was not in need of any. As I wobbled past directionless, I noticed a crowd growing around me. Lots of people were rushing towards me – this cannot be happening, what did I do? Are they giving such a rousing reception to every finisher? Then I noticed I was standing next to Juhi Chawla, yes, the Q5-cutieJuhi Chawla, the Mumbai marathon celebrity who just walked in smiling and beautiful. On any other day I would have probably done something about my lucky situation, but mind works in strange ways after you finish a marathon. Much to the disappointment of Juhi (I hope), I slipped out of the crowd and walked up to a group of runners who had already finished their run long back. By this time I had got used to generosities of strangers. “Sir, are you looking for something?” “Yes, can I borrow your phone, I want to call my wife in Bangalore and tell her I have finished my run… I don’t have my phone on me”. I got the phone, dialed the number and as I heard my wife’s voice at the other end; I choked. My wife and mother were glued to the TV set from 7 am trying to catch a glimpse of the elite runner from the family – unfortunately the TV channel had not obliged. I tried to shout, telling her I have finished my second marathon, and was in great shape (the endorphins were just kicking in), but words deserted me for the next 30 seconds. As tears streamed down my eyes the onlookers – they clapped and cheered for her while I, basking in reflected glory, tried to keep pace with her. The boards indicating the distances were melting past as we were approaching the end. With 100 meters to go, Paroma turned back; ready to cheer the next weary runner while I was left to myself. I could see three runners in front of me and I suddenly was overcome with competitive spirit. I went past them one by one oblivious of what they might be thinking (where is the hurry man?) – all were men, so there was no need to act chivalrous.

“C’mon Sourav, run and finish the race!” My friend Manjunath’s cry woke me from my stupor. I could not believe my ears. I knew I was nearby and it will not be long before this would be over. I vaguely indicated to him that my calves seemed to be bursting and I did not know whether I should risk picking up my pace. My mind was calculating - even if I walk, I will finish the race – where is the reason to run? I almost slowed down to a walk. I could now see the 1000 metre-to-go mark. I had visualized so many times this situation; I had thought I would be taking off from this point because I knew I could hold on to a sprint for a kilometer. I had fancied a strong finish like I had usually done in many of the practice runs, but the reality seemed far from it now. I was convinced that I can finish by maintaining by current pace, but running seemed out of question! And how much can one save, the mind reasoned, by walking instead of walking the last kilometer? Maybe about 3 minutes…it is not worth the injury.

“Sourav, RUN!” Paroma, another friend from our running group, having belt her 21K long back emerged from nowhere and started to run next to me. For a brief second I wanted to explain to her my predicament and the strong reason for walking the remaining 997 meters, but seeing her determined look, I decided otherwise. With every ounce of energy left in me, I pushed hard at my degenerating legs and started to swing my arms to get more leverage. I was surprised that I could get back my strides which soon became a near-sprint. Paroma was flying ahead of me much to the delight of the onlookers – they clapped and cheered for her while I, basking in reflected glory, tried to keep pace with her. The boards indicating the distances were melting past as we were approaching the end. With
Twitter literally twittered everyday with Arvind AM PGP 07 posting one bird picture a day for 365 days on his account. He became an instant celebrity among bird enthusiasts who waited anxiously for his morning posts of bird pictures that he took in and around Chennai.

Jayant Swamy PGP 92 releases his first book 'Colours in the Spectrum'
The Man and the Mission! India’s Mars Mission, Mangalyaan, is one unique feat by itself and at the helm of it all we have an alumnus of our Institute! Dr. Radhakrishnan PGP76, Chairman ISRO, is leading the team at ISRO in this iconic pursuit. We wish him and the entire ISRO team all the very best for the success of this mission.

R Chandrasekharan PGP 85 becomes Executive Vice Chairman of Cognizant

Manish Tandon PGP 93 becomes part of the esteemed Executive Council of Infosys

Sangeeta Mall PGP 86 released her second book ‘Flight of the Flamingo’

Prasun Basu PGP 08 released his first indie album ‘Before I turn 30’
Rohit Lohia PGP 08 and his wife Kamna launch a new online shopping business featuring authentic Indian craftsmanship in the form of apparel, accessories and home furnishings.

Rakesh Godhwani PGSEM 04 released his second book - ‘Seek’

Rajeev Agarwal PGSEM 08 and his wife Debyani are blessed with a baby girl Vaanya on 29th July.

Rajamannar PGP 85 becomes the CMO of Mastercard

Rakesh Godhwani PGSEM 04 released his second book - ‘Seek’

Viswanath Surendiran PGP 10 & Vasanthaa Piriya, former Event Manager at the IIMB Alumni Office, are blessed with a baby girl. They have named her Twesha, which means radiance in Sanskrit.

Mainak Chakraborthy PGP 10 tied the knot with Sumedha Chakraborthy

uchitra and Bobby Dalal comprise a typical upper-middleclass couple in most respects except one. Like many of their contemporaries, they met at work, dated for a bit and then got married. Vihaan was born three years down the line, and they recently celebrated their twelfth wedding anniversary, having been happily married for those years. He is an architect and she is the HR head at a leading bank. A double income ensures the added benefit of a lovely flat in the centre of town, foreign holidays and international schooling for Vihaan. So all is well and as it should be in the Dalal household.

The one thing that makes them different from everyone else around them is that when Vihaan was born, since Bobby was in a position to manage his career by being a part-time consultant, and Suchitra was the higher earner of the two, they took the brave decision of Bobby becoming the primary parent and caregiver of the baby.

Excerpts from the recently released best seller of Apurva Purohit PGP 89 - 'Lady You're not a Man - The Adventures of a Woman at Work'.
I am not talking about parenting at the superficial level, like Bobby dropping and picking up Vihaan from school and scolding him once in a while for not studying (which many fathers believe immediately qualifies them to boast that they are in charge of their children’s upbringing). The Dalals went the whole hog, with Bobby giving up his job and doing consultancy assignments from home. He took over complete charge of Vihaan, from getting him ready for school to packing his lunch to taking him for football practice. He manages home and hearth and birthday parties and dentist appointments - and Suchitra concentrates completely on her job, with such able support at home!

Now, you would think that all their friends and acquaintances (especially female) would laud this decision and hold up Bobby as a beacon of emancipation, pointing him out to husbands, brothers and sons as someone they should emulate. But, shockingly, that’s not the case at all. Sample a conversation I overheard between two of their catty neighbours who were at a birthday party that Bobby and Vihaan were attending.

Kitty A (busily checking her mobile): ‘Who is this Anna woman? Anna Hazare? Do you know her? I keep on getting messages to join her march or something. Is she some Delhi type socialite you think?’

Kitty B: ‘Never heard of her. But forget that. Look, there’s Bobby again with Vihaan. This is the third time I’m seeing him bringing their son to an afternoon party. Where is Suchitra? Has she left him or something?’

‘I believe she travels a lot, given that high-flying job of hers, you know,’ snickered Kitty A.

Kitty B sniffed. ‘That’s all very well, but what about him? Doesn’t he have a job to go to? Or this recession-vecession has ensured he doesn’t have one? Do you think I should ask DK to help him?’

(Have you noticed how wives of many ‘powerful’ men call their husbands by their initials? I think it is something to do with all those weapons being called by acronyms, like AK-47, MIG-20, etc. There is clearly some subliminal referencing going on here.)

‘Well, I don’t know about that, but one thing is very clear. She is the one who wears the pants in the house. See that hangdog expression on his face? Let’s go and cheer him up, poor fellow.’ And off waltzed Kitty A towards Bobby.

It was obviously inconceivable to these women that Bobby had taken a deliberate decision to be a stay-at-home father; clearly, it must have been out of having no choice in the matter! And, immediately, in their eyes, he had become the lesser partner in the marriage.

Imagine, then, how women possibly demean their own selves by projecting a stay-at-home parent’s role as a lesser one; and imagine the enormous bias a man needs to overcome if he decides that he doesn’t want to be the primary wage earner and provider for the family and encourages his wife to be so.

Many women get into a discussion with me on how everything in the corporate workplace is structured around males: like the boys’ club which goes drinking after work every day, whereas women have to rush straight home to their second job; or the smoking alcove and the men’s loo, where male colleagues can network and bond with the boss. They complain how life is so unfair, particularly for women who want both a home and a career—they have to do twice the work and make twice the effort to ensure that they are not compromising one for the other, while...
men just focus on their jobs since most of them have someone at home to pack their lunch dabbas and take care of the PTA meetings.

No doubt they are right about several aspects, but I ask these women to also pause for a moment and consider whether life is as hunky-dory as they think it is for men.

Just as women have been labelled into doing things that restrict them, men too have been tightly boxed in by society into the role they have to play: that of the primary provider and protector of the family. So, whether he likes it or not, a typical middle-class man has to get up every morning and ensure he takes care of his family and their needs. A long commute, a bad boss, a dead-end job—nothing is acceptable as an excuse for him to one day just throw up his hands and declare, ‘I’ll stay at home and take care of the kids, you work!’ While many women can and do just that.

A woman can get up one day and say, ‘I want to leave my job and stay at home and explore my creative side. I will learn painting and pottery and also be a good mother to my child.’ She may be running away from a nasty boss or a high-pressure project, but no one will point a finger at her. Instead, she will be seen as a martyr and a great mother who ‘sacrificed’ her career for the sake of her family. Ask yourselves this: can a man do the same? And, if he does, will he get the same respect he got as the chief provider and earner?

A friend’s father retired recently, and he inadvertently realized that his importance in the household had diminished almost overnight. For the last thirty-odd years, his wife had been asking him what he would like made for dinner every night; but from the day he retired, she stopped asking him and instead started asking her son (who had now become the primary earner in the house). It was heart-wrenching to see the stunned look on the father’s face when he realized the subtle shift in power that had taken place.

Before we complain about how life is so unfair to us and how men are so much better off, let us ask ourselves whether this is really true. Men are as much victims of the roles that have been written for them by society as we are. And woe betide the man who wants to change the script and explore his nurturing nature as opposed to his earning role!

Life is indeed unfair, but it is pretty democratic in its unfairness. In some way or another, life will be unfair to everyone, whatever their colour, caste, creed or gender. So, let’s accept this fundamental reality and move on.

And while we figure out how to improve the fairness quotient for ourselves, let’s take a moment to feel sympathy for the men around us, who too have their own crosses to bear.

CORPORATE MANTRA OF THE DAY

• Many of us waste a lot of time bemoaning the unfairness of life, as if it has dealt a particularly bad hand only to us. The fact is that everyone has a few dud cards somewhere in their deck.

• While it may seem that life has been unjust largely to women and men have everything going their way, the reality is not so. Men too have numerous challenges they face—the key one being that they can’t easily escape the societally designated role of being the family’s chief wage earner.

PSST...

• I know your husband may not be the knight in shining armour you dreamt of, but once in a while appreciate him for the dragons he slays every day for you - even if they take the form of cockroaches in the bathroom.

• If you know a Bobby in your life, do make sure that you go up and compliment him for being a part of that rare breed of ‘complete men’.
Stay Connected!

Stay connected with IIMB community through the IIMB Alumni Chapters in your city.

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