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The Worst Bureaucracy! Really?

Let not a few rotten apples blind us to the good work the bulk of the bureaucracy does in building India

SRIVATSA KRISHNA
IAS OFFICER

Bureaucracy bashing is India's favourite national vocation. And for good reason. Our bureaucracy has its good share of crooks, criminals and cheats who need to be put away — with or without a Lokpal. The simple counter-question is, does the bureaucracy have a disproportionately larger share of crooks than in other professions in India, and the data clearly does not say a resounding yes. In fact, there is perhaps roughly an equal proportion of crooks in the corporate sector (where routinely kickbacks are taken in large-scale procurement and bribing government), in politics, in the media (from paid news to fixing deals, blackmailing, etc), to professional service firms (reputed law firms becoming 'payment gateways' for bribes).
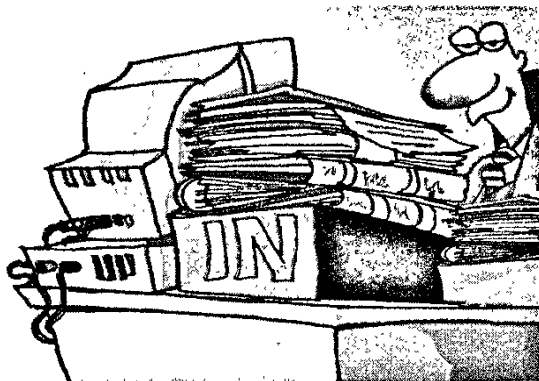
This article is meant to throw some light on the proverbial other side. It is not meant to deny or defend the existence of crooks in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) or other civil services, but merely shows the other side, because there is one. In the din surrounding corruption, even the finest of minds are making the mistake of tarring everyone with the same brush, which is simply not correct.

First, when the late Rajiv Gandhi was brutally assassinated in 1991, tempers ran high and there was mayhem all around in Sriperumbudur. One IPS officer, without any weapon on his self, protected the body from being ravaged. His name was Dr R K Raghavan, one of India's most distinguished police officers, whom the Supreme Court relies on routinely for helping them with sensitive cases, only because of his impartiality and honesty.

Second, if today millions of Indians are able to pay their electricity bills online or transact on their property easily, without paying bribes to anyone, the credit goes, not to a Lokpal watching over every single government servant, but to Rentala Chandrashekhar, J Satyanarayana and their extraordinary team of IAS officers who pioneered e-governance in the country. Likewise, if Hyderabad became the toast of the global investor community, with Microsoft establishing its only offshore facility outside the US till date, and Google, HSBC and Oracle, to name just a few, investing millions and creating thousands of jobs, the credit goes to the same team.

Third, does anyone even begin to realise the kind of personal threats to self and family, faced by V V Lakshminarayana of the IPS, and Dr U V Singh and Vipin Singh of the IFS, in taking on the intensely dangerous mining mafia or Ratn Sanjay in raiding and

SALAM

uncovering human remains inside the house of Shahabuddin, MP? Would an IIM, MBA or an IIT techie work in such a circumstance?

Fourth, how many of those who throw stones at the bureaucracy would be willing to step into the shoes of K M Abraham of the IAS, who took on the combined might of Reliance, Sahara Parivar and the Bank of Rajasthan, only to uphold the law and to maintain the independence of an impartial regulator against all odds? And the very same corporate sector, which hands out stories on morality to the bureaucracy, must not forget that more often than not, many of them, not all, want to eagerly subvert the system and break the law for a little exclusive privilege or gain.

Fifth, talk to any CEO in India's insurance industry, and he will tell you that the industry as a whole was able to get founded only because of the leadership and the level playing field provided by N Rangachary, an outstanding IRS officer, when he was in Irda, because of which premiums as a percentage of GDP grew from 2.3% (in 2000) to 6.7% (in 2010), and there are about 50 private insurance companies in India today.

Sixth, the country's first PPP airport in Kochi, built at a cost of only ₹300 crore, including the cost of 1,300 acres, was used by 4.5 million passengers in 2011 and returned a profit of ₹100 crore. No model concession agreement and no user charges. Just the outstanding leadership provided by V J Kurien of the IAS.

The message that one must appreciate is that there are countless civil servants doing extraordinary work, in equally extraordinary circumstances — the above examples are not exceptions but examples of many in the system who are doing quiet, outstanding work. Just because they don't figure in the media or are not visible all the time doesn't mean they don't exist. Ask yourself, would an N Chandra produce the magic of making TCS India's largest IT company if he were reporting to a Pappu Yadav and not to S Ramadorai? Would Nandan Nilekani and Shibulal have created the globally-admired brand Infosys, but for N R Narayanamurthy's fabled leadership, and instead if they had a Suresh Kalmadi to report to? Never forget, Paul O'Neil and Robert McNamara, the titans who shaped the destinies of Alcoa and Ford, failed badly as US Treasury and Defense secretaries, respectively.

One of the main reasons India exists as one, despite the various fissiparous tendencies, is the glue of the bureaucracy, which holds together an intensely diverse, heterogeneous country is due to the good work of many outstanding officers, albeit with many bumps. Maybe not every IAS officer is unable to understand the vulnerability of his views in the face of alternate opinions. Maybe he is unable to break away from rigid, stated positions to appreciate a very different view, perhaps because of the complex workings of our fabled democracy. India has one of the finest higher civil services in the world, sitting on one of the worst lower bureaucracies — both with honourable exceptions. Don't tar everyone with the same hue and support those in the civil service doing good work. This unarguable truth must be driven home.
(Views are personal)

AICTE to set up centres for research in top institutions

Investment to be shared between the council and its industry partner

NEW DELHI: The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is formulating an ambitious programme to set up centres for academic research in some of the top technical institutions in the country in partnership with corporate houses and industries.

The move, initiated by the technical education regulator, aims at giving boost to indus- trial research activities in the country, in the face of the criticism from various quarters that India lags far behind in such endeavours compared to many developed countries, sources in the council said.

To implement the programme, the AICTE will identify 50 "top" technical institutions in the country. A methodology and parameters to identify those 50 institutes is being worked out. At the same time, the council will also look for partnership with corporate houses and industries for setting up of research centres which will provide a suitable environment and opportunity to both scholars and students to undertake research projects in the field of their choice.

Often accused of showing step-motherly attitude towards indigenous research, the Indian Inc may be able to bridge some of the gaps if the AICTE-spearheaded research programmes takes off as per the plans, which includes technical institutes providing support infrastructure and space to the private partner in implementation of specific projects, which are of value to the industry.

Funds

"Funds towards setting up of such centres will be shared by the AICTE and its industry partner under a ratio which is being worked out," according to sources.

Several institutes of higher education have already created industry-academia partnership cells in their respective campuses to promote research and development activities, which benefits each of the stakeholders involved.

Giving an example, sources said the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, is already realising the benefits of closer industry-institute collaboration on research work they undertake.

"Some of the corporate houses and industries are quite enthusiastic about it," sources said but chose not to take name of such establishments "at this stage."

Keenly interested

Several government organisations and public sector units are also keenly interested in tapping the "talents" available in technical institutions in the country for carrying out a dedicated research and development activities that will not only benefit them but research scholars, faculties and students also, they added.

DH News Service

AICTE programme to boost industry-institute interface

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New India

TO boost research activities in technical institutes that benefit corporates too, AICTE is finalising a programme to enable industry to set up research centres in campuses where both teachers and students will be engaged for project work.

About 50 top institutes will be identified where the research centre could be set up, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) chairman S S Mantha said. "We are creating some methodology and setting some parameters on which 50 top institutions will be selected in the AICTE space. Among these 50 institutes, we will fund some and some funding will come from industry (for the research work)," he said.

Under the partnership plan, the institute will provide support infrastructure and space to corporates to set up the research centres.

"The initiative is a win-win situation for all. Industry will get land, good industry links, conduct research, have teachers and best potential students. They will get students to work on these projects. The insti-

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tutes, on their part, will gain on the research front through this. Teachers will get to work on contemporary projects and students can also participate," he said.

While several established institutes have dedicated industry-institute partnership cells to promote R&D activities, the move from AICTE is expected to give a boost to increased research activities in campuses and concretise a relationship that hitherto have been exercised on a limited scale.

Some of the prestigious institutes such as the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore are already reaping benefit from closer industry-institute collaboration on research work. Major government organisations and PSUs are also increasingly eyeing to tap the available talent in campuses for conducting R&D activities.
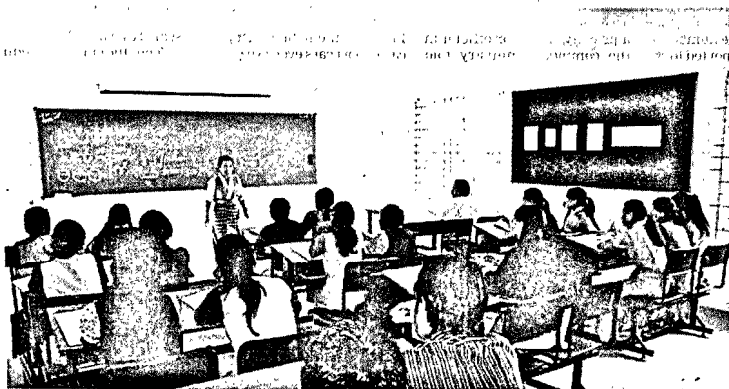
Universities, colleges to be classified in terms of quality quartiles

Kirtika Suneja

New Delhi, Jan 15: Universities and colleges in India may soon be classified in terms of quality quartiles, which will decide the infrastructure and financing support they get from the government. According to the ministry of human resource development's agenda for the Twelfth Plan, the highest amount of financial support would be provided to the lowest quality institutions, especially those in rural regions, remote areas and hilly terrain.

The classification on basis on quality will also help in achieving 30% gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education by 2020 which is 15% at present. GER is an indicator of the actual number of students enrolled visa-a-vis the number of potential students.

However, with increased private participation in the sector, the ministry says that government institutions alone will not achieve such a large enrolment target. Therefore, huge investment in private sector will be necessary.

Private sector involvement in

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higher education has been on the government's agenda since last year when it mulled new financing schemes where private parties could help in setting up institutes in the country.

According to a joint report by Ficci and Ernst & Young, the higher education system in India needs an investment of ₹lakh crore by 2020 to create an additional capacity of 25 million seats. The private sector, which accounts for 52% of the total enrollment, would invest ₹50,000 crore of this per year.

The quality quartiles maybe created on the basis of GER and in a report to the Planning Commission, the ministry has suggested that Finance Commission may be approached to provide non-plan grant for some underdeveloped states where the GER is less than all India average.

'Technology is just an extension to quality content'

InOpen Technologies, an IIT Bombay-based technological start-up working in the educational sector, designs and develops educational content and solutions for academia, especially schools. Rupesh Shah, co-founder & CEO of the start-up, in an interaction with FE's Vikram Chaudhary, shares the working of the start-up and how it aims to become a global innovative education enterprise. Excerpts:

What are open source technologies?

Open source software development is peer production by collaboration, with the end-product, source-material, and documentation available for free. Open source is often clubbed with free software, creating a new category called free and open source software (FOSS), which offers instantaneous advantages of affordability and long-term stability with respect to system maintenance. Our product Computer Masti, built around open source and FOSS-based applications, is an extensive research-based product, created at IIT Bombay, for effectively teaching computers in schools. It is designed as a series of text books, after an understanding of the curriculum suitable for primary and secondary school students. We have plugged in Computer Masti in about 78 schools and have been able to reduce their expenditure on software and licences by 80%.

Do you intend to stick to computer training?

Yes we intend to stick to computer training as that is our core service area. In an age where computer literacy is a must and given the fact that IT sector is one of the major contributors to India's GDP, we would like to provide a level playing field to the children from an early age. Even after making computer training mandatory at schools since 1995, the course content and teaching method remains mediocre. We are contributing towards making it better, aiming to reach to 1 million students by 2013.

How do you develop educational content?

We have a team of around 50 people who are either developing new content or working towards improvising existing content. The content is created in basic formats like story boards or content sheets. We then port it to different technology platforms as per the need and feasibility of the content. We believe that technology is just an extension to quality content.

How many schools/institutions are you currently associated with?

We are serving approximately 2.5 lakh students spread across 78 schools and 4 government projects. We have also trained more than 2,000 teachers. Apart from that we have a strong online presence and our e-books have been downloaded in more than 120 countries.

What is the average cost per student for Computer Masti?

It depends on various factors. Since we offer a range of services such as creating customised content, appointing a resource person, training school teachers, hand-holding visits, assessment and so on, giving a cost estimate is difficult.

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

First, we expected to reach to 3 million students by 2016. Then, we intend to supply the highest quality of content and training in all major subjects for schools. We will use our customer experience to reach our vision. We also may launch a comprehensive web-based learning experience that will use the power of Computer Masti. Then we wish to bring out Computer Masti in all major Indian and some foreign languages. Lastly, we wish to open company-operated centres for teacher and student learning activities, and also generate e-content for new generation smartphones and tablets.

It is elementary

To improve our education system, we need to encourage students to think critically all the way from school through higher education, writes PRIYAMVADA NATARAJAN

▪ In letter and spirit: A schoolgirl in Hyderabad   AFP

A lot of ink has been spilt on what ails the urban Indian educational system from schools to universities. Focusing on urban schools where teachers and students show up and facilities exist, we are still questioning how we teach and what we teach. The primary complaint seems to be that in the early years we are overloading students with schoolwork. Well, compared to South Korea, we clearly are not, but compared to Finland, we definitely are. Note that in international educational rankings both Finland and South Korea anchor the top, the US holds the 14th spot; but India is not in the top 351.

At the university level, we are enamoured with the so-called liberal education model offered by elite American colleges and would like to replicate them. In fact, many such educational establishments have opened satellite campuses here and many more are poised to do so. However, for these for-profit outfits, there is an ever-present possibility that they will fold and leave if they do not meet their margins like Michigan State University did in Abu Dhabi. Regulation of foreign educational institutions in the proposed Bill in Parliament will ensure stability and quality of the institutions that partner and/or open shop independently in India.

Meanwhile, surely, we can figure out how to transform our educational system in a sustainable fashion from within. All of this behoves us to examine thoughtfully what we are missing here at the school level and at the university level. Along with the lamentation of over-burdening children in school and the onerous size of their school bags, there is the mounting pressure on getting into universities post-secondary education. There has been animated discussion of how students in urban Indian high schools are now applying to elite colleges in the US in droves as it is less competitive than, say, getting into St. Stephen's College in Delhi. This outflow is inevitable as there is an emerging robust class of wealthy Indians who can now afford to pay for an elite American college education. There will always be a pipeline of kids from such families who will leave the country. For the majority of bright kids, this is, however, not an option. So how do we cater to them and keep them interested in whatever it is that they choose to do?

WHAT IS MISSING IN OUR SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IS THE FOSTERING OF CRITICAL THINKING THAT DERIVES FROM ACTIVE LEARNING, QUESTIONING AND THINKING AS WE LEARN

I think we need to intervene early, perhaps even in elementary school or middle school, regardless, we need to radically rethink what an education is for, all the way from school level to higher education. A disclosure: I am one of those people who did move to the US for undergraduate education on a scholarship. I left India for two reasons: I was addicted to learning by doing and wanted to be in a place where I could do research as an undergraduate, and I had broad interests and wanted to pursue philosophy, creative writing and history formally as part of my undergraduate education along with physics and mathematics. There was no option at that time in India for any of these wants.

Once I tracked into a BSc in physics honours course for example, I would at most be exposed to a smattering of mathematics and possibly a bit of chemistry — definitely not philosophy or history. What I craved was the process of learning by figuring things out outside the classroom setting. It is this process that fosters critical thinking. We need to provide unstructured learning time and opportunities throughout the schooling years and beyond. What is missing in our school and university system is the fostering of critical thinking. Critical thinking derives from more active learning, questioning and thinking as we learn and from unstructured learning experiences. Our system is too skewed towards formal education; for example in mathematics our system teaches us equations without giving us a feel for what they mean and why they are relevant.

At the college level, a more flexible understanding of undergraduate education is what is needed. One in which students can mix and match courses with a major concentration in a chosen subject and there is enough flexibility to pick and choose electives to provide a broad base so that a history major is required to learn quantitative reasoning and a math major reads the major books. With a little bit of rethinking and revamping we can do this ourselves in our own way. We do not need to learn this from anywhere else. Permeability in curricula to devote time to learn, digest, think, challenge and be challenged is what is sorely needed. This requires a radical attitude shift.

Historically, research activities have been the remit of centres that lie outside the undergraduate teaching institutions, namely colleges and universities. The re-integration of research and teaching activities needs to be actively pursued. In setting up the Indian Institutes for Science Education and Research (IISERs), the Government of India has redressed this balance although only in the sciences. In these institutes, research is part and parcel of the undergraduate science curriculum and every student gets a taste of it. However, there is no such analog for the humanities. The research component needs to be introduced into the humanities and social sciences curriculum as well. Rather than set up discipline specific institutes, it would be more prudent to transform existing college and university education by introducing a research component to all curricula.

The issue of the lack of breadth in an undergraduate education is yet to be properly addressed. Both initiatives will likely need extension of the current three-year degree courses to four-year degree programmes.

The vice-chancellor of Delhi University, Dinesh Singh, has recently initiated an ambitious plan for July 2013 that should enable a crossing of institutional barriers offering unprecedented course choices in Delhi for undergraduates to register among JNU, IIT, Jamia and DU. If this experiment succeeds, this pilot programme can sow the seeds to a bold and much-needed restructuring of higher education in India. If we aspire to becoming a knowledge economy and innovation powerhouse, we need to radically rethink what we mean by an education.

Priyamvada Natarajan is professor, department of Astronomy & Physics, Yale University
The views expressed by the author are personal

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Panel consensus on return to centralized admission process

Manash Pratim Gohain |TNN

New Delhi: Centralized admission is all set to make a comeback in Delhi University. The facility of online registration may also be available for undergraduate courses. If recommendations of the high-powered committee are accepted by the university, cut-offs for the general and OBC categories will continue to be released by individual colleges. Further, SC/ST students might be able to change their course at the college level. The committee on admission reforms is likely to submit its report by mid-February.

After its fifth meeting on Friday, there was a consensus on the need for reverting to the centralized admission process. The last admission season saw the university dispensing with pre-admission registration, including the centralized OMR and individual college forms. The 16 principals on the committee are of the view that the experiment was not a step in the right direction.

REPORT IN FEB

"Registration is a must and last year's experiment reinforced that it helps manage admissions better. Most of the principals are batting for centralized registration for both general and reserved categories as well as making registration online for the ease of out-station as well as local students. The university will also be relieved of selling prospectuses," said a principal, a member of the committee, on condition of anonymity.

Another measure likely to be recommended is to give SC/ST students the option to change their course at the college level itself. At present, the selected candidates get a slip from the university allocating them the course and the college, which cannot be changed at the college level.

"We are thinking of recommending a panel at the college, which will be headed by a SC/ST teacher and will help candidates if they wish to change courses according to the eligibility criteria or vacancies," said another principal.

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CIC to list all pending cases on website

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: With complaints of arbitrariness in hearing of cases piling up, the Central Information Commission last week began listing out pending cases before each commissioner on its website.

Cases pending before chief information commissioner Satyananda Mishra and information commissioner Shailesh Gandhi have already been uploaded while the other commissioners are likely to follow soon. This is the first time that an information commission has displayed at least a partial list of cases pending before it.

Speaking about the move, Mishra said, "This is an added advantage to the public. Other commissioners will also put up their list of pending cases but we have not set a time frame." CIC has a pendency of 22,000 cases with about 2,500 cases added every month.

The decision was prompted by an RTI application that sought information on the status of a case filed a year ago. Information commissioner Shailesh Gandhi said that in replying to the decision, the commission realized that the case was over a year old and was inadvertently left out of the cause list.

"I realized that if a mistake had been made in one case, it could have been made in some others as well. A careful search of 2010 cases revealed another 110 cases

The CIC has a pendency of 22,000 cases with about 2,500 cases added every month

which had been forgotten and missed completely," Gandhi said.

In fact, one of the cases related to the widow of a government employee and her struggle to get pension that only ended 17 years later.

The 'List of pending cases' has been displayed on the CIC website and will be updated every month. Gandhi said, "CIC is only six years old and this will be an opportunity for us to correct mistakes and also reassure citizens that there is fairness in taking up their cases. In most commissions and judicial bodies, citizens suspect arbitrariness and corruption in the listing of cases. The simple act of listing all pending cases publicly will go a long way in restoring citizens' confidence in these institutions, and also act as self-regulating check."

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B-school grads choose job profile over hefty pay, survey finds

Our Bureau
New Delhi, Jan. 15

Eighty three per cent of India's leading B-school graduates are willing to forego hefty pay packets for the sake of a job profile of their preference, says a survey by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India.

The country-wide survey covered over 500 students in top B-schools of India.

When given a choice between working for a growing company or an established one, 60 per cent respondents opted for companies in the growth phase.

Banking emerged as the most preferred sector among the respondents, with 51 per cent eyeing the sector. Consultancy, marketing and IT are the other favoured sectors.

Seventy five per cent of the respondents want jobs in the

▶ *The country-wide survey covered over 500 students in top B-schools of India.*

US. The UK and Australia were the next favourite destinations, with 40 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, opting for these countries.

Among the 32 per cent respondents who preferred to work in India, 48 per cent placed no priority at all to job location. Another 42 per cent considered location as an influencing factor second to job profile, affecting their decision.

Thirty four per cent stated they would not sacrifice the sector of their choice for any perk in form of pay or profile.

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वित्तीय क्षेत्र से इंजीनियरों की तौबा

कल्पना पाठक

▶ 10 से 20 फीसदी तक बढ़े वेतन

■ छात्र वित्तीय नौकरियों की जगह इंजीनियरिंग नौकरियों को दे रहे हैं तरजीह

■ छात्रों के दिमाग में हावी है नौकरी सुरक्षा की चिंता

■ छात्र प्रौद्योगिकी, वाहन और इंजीनियरिंग क्षेत्रों में नौकरी कर रहे पसंद

लार्सन ऐंड टुब्रो (एल ऐंड टी) के अध्यक्ष ए एम नाइक बार-बार शिकायत करते हैं कि देश के सबसे बड़े इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेजों के छात्र पारंपरिक तौर पर विनिर्माण क्षेत्र को तरजीह नहीं देते हैं। उनका कहना है, 'कोई भी फर्श पर हाथ गंदे नहीं करना चाहता। हर व्यक्ति सलाहकार सेवा या सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी (आईटी) क्षेत्र की नौकरियों को पसंद करता हुआ नजर आता है।' यही वजह है कि घरेलू पूंजीगत वस्तु क्षेत्र की सबसे बड़ी कंपनियों में शामिल एल ऐंड टी प्रतिभाशाली छात्रों की नियुक्ति के लिए अपेक्षाकृत कम जानेमाने संस्थानों के परिसर में जाती है।

लेकिन अब नाइक को यह जानकर खुश होना चाहिए कि कम-से-कम इस वर्ष हालात बदलते हुए दिख रहे हैं। भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (आईआईटी) जैसे इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेजों के कई छात्रों

की रुचि आकर्षक वित्तीय क्षेत्र की नौकरियों में घटने लगी है और वे प्रमुख इंजीनियरिंग क्षेत्रों में रोजगार को तरजीह देने लगे हैं। मसलन, आईआईटी बंबई में नियुक्ति के लिए बचे लगभग 500 छात्रों में से ज्यादातर नौकरियों के लिए इंजीनियरिंग कंपनियों के परिसर आने का इंतजार कर रहे हैं।

आईआईटी बंबई के प्लेसमेंट प्रमुख रवि सिन्हा ने कहा, 'इस वर्ष हमने देखा है कि कई छात्र

इंजीनियरिंग कंपनियों में नौकरी पाने का इंतजार कर रहे हैं। यहां तक कि हमारे सर्वाधिक प्रतिभाशाली छात्र, जिनका चयन सलाहकार एवं वित्तीय कंपनियां आसानी से कर लेती हैं, उन्होंने भी वित्तीय कंपनियों के साथ साक्षात्कार में नहीं बैठने का फैसला किया है।' आईआईटी-बंबई में कुल 1,383 छात्र प्लेसमेंट के लिए पंजीकृत हैं और उन्हें नौकरियों की पेशकश के लिए तकरीबन 200 कंपनियां परिसर

आएंगी। पिछले साल यहां के छात्रों के लिए आईटी और प्रबंधन सलाहकार क्षेत्र सबसे बेहतर विकल्प साबित हुए थे। इसके बाद वित्तीय कंपनियों को तरजीह दी गई थी। वर्ष 2010-11 के प्लेसमेंट सीजन के दौरान वित्तीय क्षेत्र में नौकरियों की पेशकश की संख्या 70 से बढ़कर 91 हो गई थी, जबकि सलाहकार फर्मों की ओर से 95 छात्रों को नौकरी की पेशकश की गई थी। पिछले साल आईआईटी बंबई के 69 छात्रों ने अनुसंधान एवं विकास (आर ऐंड डी) फर्मों की पेशकश स्वीकारी थी, जबकि वर्ष 2009-10 में 54 छात्रों ने इस क्षेत्र में नौकरी करना पसंद किया था। आईआईटी रूड़की में 1,200 छात्रों में से अब तक लगभग 650 छात्रों को नौकरियां मिलीं हैं। इस संस्थान ने कहा कि इन 650 में से लगभग 150 छात्रों ने गैर-वित्तीय प्रोफाइल अपनाया। कई छात्रों का कहना है कि वे प्रबंधन की डिग्री लेने के बाद किसी वित्तीय संगठन से जुड़ेंगे।

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Renunciation is key to excellence

IIMK zooms in on wisdom for management from Indian spiritual traditions.

Mony K. Mathew

Renunciation is key to achieving excellence in life as well as business; and to emerge as a true leader, one has to withdraw from 'self' and move on to serve 'others', said Prof. Debashis Chatterjee, Director, Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIMK). He was delivering the keynote address at a symposium on 'Practical wisdom for management from the Indian spiritual traditions' at IIMK last week.

Citing teachings in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, he stressed on the ability to withhold one's senses and thoughts when required. True renunciation would render people impervious to material turbulence surrounding

them, he said, making them 'white screens' where images come and go without leaving an imprint. He distinguished between 'wish' and 'will': the former being a weak instinct, while the latter is a strong intention of action.
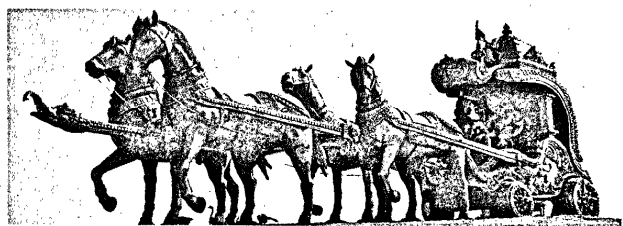
M.K. Chauhan of Mahendra and Young Knowledge Foundation pointed out society's negative perception of business. He emphasised on the shift towards the triple bottom line: 'Environment, Finance and Society'. According to him, good governance involves 'transparency, accountability and equanimity'.

Snehal Shah, founder and CEO, i2V solutions; and Professor at School of Inspired Leadership, delved into understanding yogic philosophy through the *Panchakosha* frame-

work and applying it to organisational layers. She took the audience through the five layers of *Panchakosha*: Body (*Annamaya*), Energy (*Pranamaya*), Heart (*Manomaya*), Brain (*Vignamaya*) and Soul (*Anandamaya*).

She explained how these layers can be applied to the organisation through symbols and spaces, modes of communication, relationships and rituals and practices that ultimately lead to a sense of oneness in the organisation.

Speakers were many and so were learnings for future managers. The biggest possibly was that there's no escaping that doing good is good for the corporate world — and that spirituality could serve as a guiding light in that direction.

Seeking answers in Indian spirituality. (Above) A Mahabharatha sculpture depicting Krishna teaching the Gita to Arjuna. — Sampath Kumar

Brain science and principles of Hinduism

Application to collaboration challenges in work teams and business organisations

Srinivasan S. Pillay, M.D.
Prasad Kaipa, Ph.D.

In 2007, *HR* magazine highlighted the fact that the 21st century is likely to be the age of collaboration because many of today's problems are complex, often demanding cross-disciplinary expertise. Leveraging Knowledge Blog states further that because knowledge is the most important asset today, this century has become the age of collaboration as a direct consequence of the knowledge economy that we live in. Strategic partnerships may optimise project management, enhance innovation, and ensure sustainable change. Despite these clear advantages, collaboration does not come easy for organisations and very few companies know how to collaborate internally and externally according to David Smith of Accenture.

In this paper we will discuss how *Advaita Vedanta* — a Hindu philosophy of non-dualism — and Yoga Sutras of *Patanjali* can provide meaningful perspectives on collaboration and how they can be applied to teams and organisations. In addition, we will describe how these perspectives are grounded in brain science, and how combining the insights from brain science and *Advaita Vedanta* and Yoga Sutras provides unique strategies for collaboration.

PREMISE

How can a non-dualistic perspective be applied to increase ROI on collaboration?

What are the brain mechanisms that support a non-dualistic perspective?

How can this brain state of collaboration be achieved by managers?

What is the relevance of this to the overall consciousness of the business?

CORE CONCEPT

Advaita Vedanta is the non-dualistic system of Vedanta expounded primarily by an 8th century Indian philosopher named Sankara. This philosophy rests on the tenet that non-duality does not mean the non-existence of a second thing, but its non-existence as other than yourself. In the collaboration context, this would imply the importance of being aware of the unifying principles underlying two parties coming together.

Brain science and psychology research teach us that there are several lines of evidence that support the idea of non-duality. The notion of a shared self is exemplified in the phenomenon of mirror neurons which are neural systems that represent the point of view of another person automatically. Thus, there is evidence that we automatically represent the actions, intentions and emotions of others in our brains. In addition, recent studies have demonstrated that when actions are performed jointly, there is an automatic formation of a new agentic identity (a 'we' identity) that alters the prior sense of agency.

The neural substrates for self and other agency are remarkably different and we discuss the implications of this, including such facts as the evidence that meditation can reduce activation in the self, space and time processing brain regions. In fact, automatic self-transcending and pure consciousness show distinct neural patterns on EEG.

Furthermore, research on joint attention shows us that people are more likely to be allocentric than egocentric under such conditions. This may be because reciprocity, cooperativeness, and social rewards activate reward processing areas with strong dopaminergic input, such as the ventral striatum in the human brain. Joint attention activates the brain's mentalising ability as well.

UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ADVAITA VEDANTA (AV)

The old view would purport that collaboration involves two separate intelligences working together. The AV view would suggest that the two intelligences give rise to a new intelligence that can be leveraged differently. The older view would suggest that people work independently in collaborations. The AV view combined with brain science suggests that collaborations would benefit from mirroring in certain instances and counter-mirroring in others.

The old view would suggest that it is important to focus on coordination whereas the AV view would suggest that internal coherence is as important as coordination and that without internal coherence, the result of collaboration does not benefit either entity and the time and effort put into collaboration leads to delays and frustration instead of co-creation.

▶ Brain science and psychology research teach us that there are several lines of evidence that support the idea of non-duality.

CONCLUSION

Expressed as an equation, $1 + 1 = 11$ is the desired result of collaboration and by applying lessons from *Advaita Vedanta* and brain science, we believe organisations and teams can achieve this result.

Read related article alongside.

Yahoo! all set to go local in India via 8 languages

Content now available in Hindi, Marathi and Tamil

SAMEER RANJAN BAKSHI

Bangalore

INTERNET search engine, Yahoo, which reached 80 per cent of Indian internet users, is betting big on its plan of going local in India. By the end of 2012, it will have its content ready in eight Indian regional languages. It is even redesigning its home page to make it simple and user-friendly for young and old alike.

Yahoo India R&D, vice president and chief executive officer, Shouvick Mukherjee, said, "The superior design experiences includes creating an emotional connect with users. It is design friendly for older users who have just started using internet, as well as for the 18 year old internet users from a small town". Currently Yahoo content is available in three Indian languages — Hindi, Marathi and Tamil.

Yahoo's competitor, Google has expanded its translation services to include Indian languages including Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu.

RISING FAME: Two years ago, Yahoo! was accessed by 70% of Indian internet users, but now it is accessed by 80% of the same

Two years back, Yahoo was accessed by 70 per cent of the Indian internet users. But now it is being accessed by 80 per cent of the Indian internet users, said, Yahoo, corporate communication, head, Arunav Sinha.

The company has been boosted by seeing the growth of local language internet users. Yahoo Tamil has grown by 160 per cent in page views in the last months, while Yahoo Marathi has seen a growth of 135 per cent in page views in a span of three months. Yahoo Tamil currently ranks at joint number 2 in the market in terms of user base.

Yahoo thinks its local content will have its share increase amongst the Indian internet users. Sinha said, "If the total internet users has to increase from current 100 million to 250 million, then it can happen only through local languages and not through English".

The development of the new design and local look is being done at the Bangalore Yahoo R&D office, which has about 2,000 employees. Mukherjee, said, "In 2011, Yahoo India R&D contributed almost half of the ideas which Yahoo developed globally".

The home page design will really reflect local culture and sensitivity to connect with locals. Sinha said, "Local icons, local symbols, and region specific contents would be available for those portals. For example if you go to Marathi.Yahoo.com, you can see images of Shivaji, trumpets and others".

Yahoo didn't specify the amount of investment for the local project, but Sinha added, "Every year Yahoo spends a $1 billion globally for R&D and a significant part of it comes to India".

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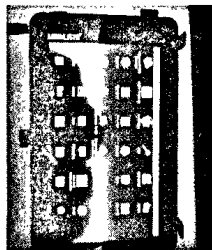
Crucial meeting on Akash tablet project today

fe Bureau

New Delhi, Jan 15: The fate of the country's most ambitious hardware project, Aakash, will be decided on Monday when the makers of the low-cost computing device -Datawind- meet the ministry of human resource development and IIT-Rajasthan.

Contractual issues on the supply of one lakh units- upgraded or basic models- till March 31 is the cause of this crucial meet between the stakeholders.

Even as analysts call the project a non-starter owing to the "dismal performance" of the pilot tablets distributed among students, Datawind maintains that it put a sold-out sign on the basic Aakash tablet a month back and indicated to the market that the version is at the end of its life, and the next generation will be with upgraded features.

London-based Datawind's CEO Suneet Singh Tuli ex-

plained that this was not a new stand taken by the company as this product enhancement was announced during the October launch. "There is no indication that the project will be shelved," he said. Sources say that Datawind had committed to supply 30,000 tablets as per the old specifications and 70,000 as per the new specifications formalised after the trial run. "Datawind has now communicated to us its inability to deliver these as per the March 31 deadline," a ministry official revealed. However, he hastened to add that the glitches now being faced were "routine contractual issues which can occur in any tie-up"

Aakash was developed as part of the ministry's aim to link 25,000 colleges and 400 universities in an e-learning programme. Originally projected as a "$35 laptop", the device will be sold to the government at $50 and will be distributed at a government-subsidised price of $35. A commercial version of Aakash is currently marketed as UbiSlate 7+ at a price of $60.

Dutta for closer links between Cornell and Indian thinkers

YOSHITA SINGH

Press Trust of India

PREPARING to assume charge as Dean of the Ivy league Cornell University's Johnson Business School, Soumitra Dutta plans to build stronger links with researchers and thinkers in India as part of his strategy to "take Johnson to the world, and bring the world to Johnson."

Dutta, an IIT Delhi alumnus, will become the 11th dean of the Samuel Curtis Johnson graduate school of management at Cornell on July 1, becoming the first Indian-origin head in the institution's 66-year old history.

"It is a very exciting challenge because Cornell is a great brand and Johnson is a great school and the challenge is to take something that is already very good and make it even better," Dutta told PTI.

Outlining the key areas he will focus on as Johnson's dean, Dutta said a multipolar world has made it important for America to be much more global in its outlook as the superpower cannot solve its problems or the world's problems alone anymore.

"As a consequence of this increased focus on globalisation, Cornell, by hiring me, is trying to have more aggressive stance in bringing the world to Cornell and taking Cornell to the world. In this context, the institution needs to have deeper knowledge about the phenomena and activities happening in emerging markets, including India," he said.

What an idea, sir: Experts list most beautiful theories

New York: From Darwinian evolution to the idea that personality is largely shaped by chance, the favorite theories of the world's most eminent thinkers are as eclectic as science itself.

Every January, John Brockman, the impresario and literary agent who presides over the online salon Edge.org, asks his circle of scientists, digerati and humanities scholars to tackle one question.

In previous years, they have included "how is the internet changing the way you think?" and "what is the most important invention in the last 2,000 years?"

This year, he posed the open-ended question "what is your favorite deep, elegant or beautiful explanation?"

The responses, released at midnight on Sunday, provide a crash course in science both well known and far out-of-the-box, as admired by the likes of astronomer Royal Martin Rees, physicist Freeman Dyson and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins.

Several of the nearly 200 scholars nominated what are arguably the two most powerful scientific theories ever developed. "Darwin's natural selection wins hands down," argues Dawkins, emeritus professor at Oxford University.

"Never in the field of human comprehension were so many facts explained by assuming so few," he says of the theory that encompasses everything about life, based on the idea of natural selection operating on random genetic mutations.

Einstein's theory of relativity, which explains gravity as the curvature of space, also gets a few nods. As theoretical physicist Steve Giddings of University of California, writes, "This central idea has shaped our ideas of modern cosmology (and) given us the image of the expanding universe."

General relativity explains black holes, the bend-

ing of light and "even offers a possible explanation of the origin of our Universe — as quantum tunneling from 'nothing'," he writes.

Terrence Sejnowski, a computational neuroscientist at the Salk Institute, extols the discovery that the conscious, deliberative mind is not the author of important decisions such as what work people do and who they marry. Instead, he writes, "an ancient brain system called the basal ganglia, brain circuits that consciousness cannot access", pull the strings.

Running on the neuro-

FAVOURITE CHOICE: Darwin's natural selection wins hands down, says Richard Dawkins, emeritus professor at Oxford

chemical dopamine, they predict how rewarding a choice will be — if I pick this apartment, how happy will I be? — "evaluate the current state of the entire cortex and inform the brain about the best course of action," explains Sejnowski.

Only later do people construct an explanation for their choices, he said in an interview, convincing themselves incorrectly volition and logic were responsible.

To neuroscientist Robert Sapolsky of Stanford University, the most beautiful idea is emergence, in which complex phenomena almost magically come into being from simple components. REUTERS

Ancient Egyptians first practised embalming

What is embalming?
Embalming is the process of disinfecting a body to protect it from decaying. Today, it is typically done for temporary preservation of the body so that it can be put for public display before the funeral. The process is believed to have been first practised by the ancient Egyptians and some communities in Asia and South America. Some bodies which were buried far from the wet soil of the Nile were naturally preserved, retaining the form and the features. It is believed that those naturally preserved bodies might have evoked the belief that people in some form exist even after they are dead and hence the process of chemical embalming might have developed.

When did modern embalming begin?
During the early era of Christianity, embalming was discouraged as a pagan custom. It was the Renaissance that triggered interest in human anatomy and people started experiments to preserve the human body for longer periods. It is believed that Leonardo da Vinci was among

> Embalming is the process of disinfecting a body to protect it from decaying. Leonardo da Vinci was among the pioneers who developed the method of venous injection to preserve the body from decaying

the pioneers who developed the method of venous injection to preserve the human body from decaying. Incidents of embalming are reported from 17th century Netherlands, England and Scotland. The Dutch botanist and anatomist, Frederik Ruysch, used the secret liquor balsamicum to embalm bodies. The American civil war was the turning point for modern embalming. Corpses of union officers were embalmed and sent home for burial. During that period it was hailed as a patriotic activity.

How is embalming done?
A typical embalming starts with cleaning of the body. After this the blood is drained through the veins. All kinds of cavity fluids are removed to be replaced by the embalming preservatives, which are injected through the arteries. This is typically a mixture of water and formaldehyde. These preservatives protect the body from bacterial and other infections. Usually 3.8 litres of embalming solution is needed for every 50 pounds (22.7 kg) of body weight. As the main purpose of embalming is to give the body a lifelike appearance, hence in almost all cases cosmetics and masking pastes are also applied.

Who are the famous people who have been embalmed?
The former North Korean president Kim Jong Il, who died recently, the Russian leader Vladimir Lenin and China's chairman Mao are the most famous political leaders whose bodies are preserved until now. Others whose bodies were embalmed for some time include Abraham Lincoln, Joseph Stalin and former Argentinean first lady Eva Peron. Embalming is not permanent and hence a periodic renewal is needed to preserve the body for a longer period.

LEARNING WITH THE TIMES