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*The Game of Life
in the Classroom*



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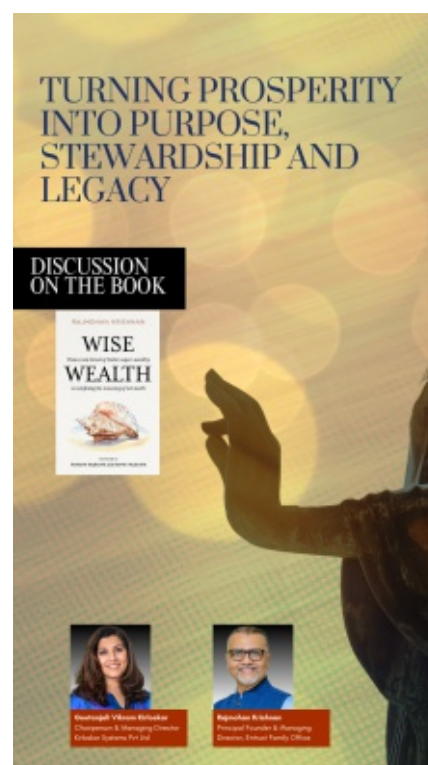
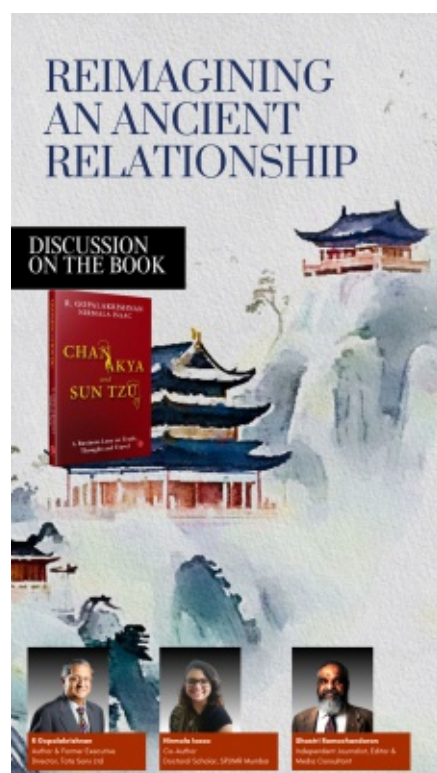
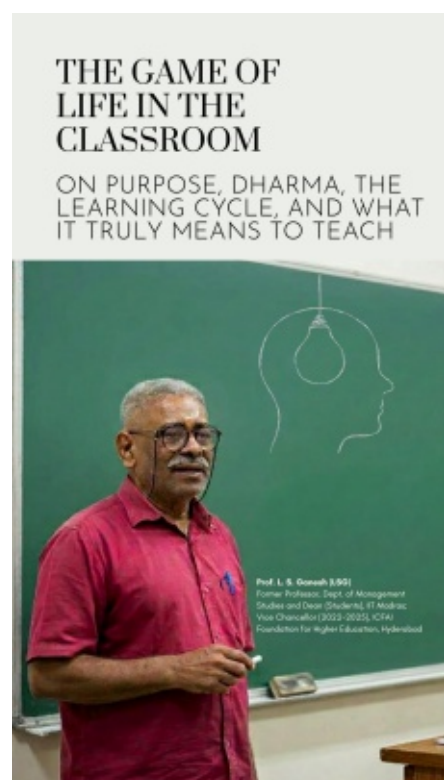
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MMA@70: Celebrating a Legacy of Leadership and Managerial Excellence

It is both a privilege and a matter of immense pride to share that the **70th Platinum Jubilee Annual General Meeting** of the Madras Management Association will be held on **Friday, 10 July 2026**, at the MMA Management Center. This landmark AGM is far more than a statutory gathering; it is a celebration of seven decades of contribution to management thought, leadership development, and nation-building through professional excellence.

A highlight of the evening will be the presentation of the prestigious MMA Award for Managerial

The occasion will also provide an opportunity to honour MMA's distinguished Past Presidents, whose vision, dedication, and stewardship have shaped the Association into one of India's foremost management institutions.

Excellence, which recognizes organizations that have demonstrated outstanding achievements across manufacturing, services, SMEs, and education. The award winners will participate in a special seminar, sharing their inspiring journeys of perseverance, innovation, and transformational leadership—lessons that are invaluable for today's managers, entrepreneurs, and future leaders.

The occasion will also provide an opportunity to honour MMA's distinguished Past Presidents, whose vision, dedication, and stewardship have shaped the Association into one of India's foremost management institutions. It is fitting that we salute these remarkable leaders whose contributions continue to inspire generations of management professionals.

Adding to the significance of the event, MMA will launch Volume II of its coffee table book, capturing the Association's vibrant post-pandemic journey; Volume III of *"Turning Points - Management Lessons from Legends"*; and a special commemorative issue of Business Mandate. Together, these publications reflect MMA's enduring commitment to knowledge sharing and thought leadership.

We are truly privileged to welcome **Mr T.V.Narendran**, CEO & Managing Director, Tata Steel and President, AIMA, and **Mr Thomas Dose**, Managing

Director, BMW Group Plant Chennai, as our distinguished Chief Guests. Their presence and insights will undoubtedly enrich the occasion and inspire all participants.

As we celebrate this historic milestone, I warmly invite all our members and well-wishers to join us on Friday, 10 July 2026, from 3.00 p.m. onwards, for an evening of recognition, reflection, learning, and fellowship, culminating in a grand Gala Dinner. It will be an opportunity to celebrate our shared achievements and reaffirm our commitment to excellence.

Let us come together to honour the past, celebrate the present, and shape the future of management leadership through the enduring spirit of MMA.

EDUCATION BEYOND MARKS: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LIFE

This issue's cover story by **Professor L. S. Ganesh**, Former Vice Chancellor, ICFAI University, on "*The Game of Life in the Classroom: On purpose, dharma, the learning cycle, and what it truly means to teach*," is both timely and deeply relevant.

In a rapidly changing world, education is often judged by marks, rankings and placements. While academic excellence opens doors, the true purpose of education extends far beyond report cards. It is about shaping character, nurturing empathy, encouraging curiosity and preparing young people not merely for careers, but for life.

The future of education will be defined by how thoughtfully we design human learning, and by the role we assign to technology in supporting—not replacing—

the teacher. Effective classrooms must encourage students to challenge ideas, ask difficult questions, think independently and learn through reflection, rather than simply reproduce information in examinations.

For India, this is not merely an educational priority; it is central to nation building. The talent we nurture today will shape the society, economy and leadership of tomorrow. Sustained institutional support, teacher training and assessment reforms are essential if classroom transformation is to become a reality across our schools and colleges.

Education reform must therefore move beyond policy intent to meaningful implementation. The classroom must become a space where purpose, values, knowledge and human potential come together.

INDIA AT A DEMOGRAPHIC CROSSROADS: WILL WE GROW OLD BEFORE WE GROW RICH?

The latest Sample Registration System (SRS) Report 2024 has brought into sharp focus a critical demographic challenge for India. The report indicates that India's Total Fertility Rate has declined below replacement level, signalling that the country may be moving towards a shrinking population if current trends continue.

However, India does not have one demographic story; it has many. Fertility levels vary widely across states, reflecting differences in education, income, health access, urbanisation and social development. While some states have already seen fertility fall sharply, others continue to record higher birth rates. This creates a complex policy challenge, especially for

Kerala's decision to establish a dedicated Department for the Elderly is a timely wake-up call for the rest of India.

states that have successfully controlled population growth and achieved better development outcomes.

The implications are far-reaching. A declining fertility rate raises concerns about ageing, workforce availability, productivity and social security. At the same time, regional demographic imbalances have a direct bearing on resource allocation, political representation and the sensitive issue of delimitation. Kerala's decision to establish a dedicated Department for the Elderly is a timely wake-up call for the rest of India. It is only a matter of time before many other states experience similar shifts in their population age structure. Governments must prepare for this transition by strengthening healthcare, social security and elderly care systems. Equally important is prudent fiscal planning. States would do well to reduce wasteful expenditure and create dedicated reserve funds to meet the growing demands of an ageing society.

The recent move by Andhra Pradesh to consider incentives to arrest population decline is a sign of the changing policy debate. India must ensure that it does not grow old before it grows rich. This calls for serious analysis, informed public debate and an urgent, balanced policy response.

CLIMATE CHANGE: THE WORKFORCE CHALLENGE BUSINESSES CAN NO LONGER IGNORE

Climate change is no longer a distant

India's growth ambitions depend not only on investments and infrastructure development but also on the resilience of its workforce.

environmental concern; it is rapidly becoming a business and workforce challenge. While much of the discussion continues to focus on emissions, renewable energy, and sustainable infrastructure, organizations must also confront a more immediate reality—the impact of extreme weather on their employees.

Rising temperatures, prolonged heat waves, floods, and other climate-related disruptions are affecting the safety, health, and productivity of millions of workers across India. For businesses, the challenge extends beyond meeting sustainability goals. It is about ensuring that employees can work safely and effectively in increasingly harsh conditions.

India's growth ambitions depend not only on investments and infrastructure development but also on the resilience of its workforce. Millions of workers, particularly those in manufacturing, construction, logistics, agriculture, and other outdoor occupations, operate without the comfort of climate-controlled environments. Protecting them from heat stress and weather-related risks must become a strategic priority.

Corporate India has an opportunity—and a responsibility—to lead by adopting climate-resilient workplace practices, investing in worker safety, and integrating climate adaptation into business planning. The future of sustainable growth will depend as much on safeguarding people as on reducing emissions.

SANCTIONS, CONFLICT AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY: WHO REALLY PAYS THE PRICE?

The world economy continues to face uncertainty as geopolitical tensions intensify across key regions. Economic sanctions have become a preferred instrument of international pressure, but an important question remains: Do sanctions truly achieve their intended objectives, or do they create unintended consequences for the global economy?

With concerns over disruptions to critical energy routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, the risk of hydrocarbon shortages remains significant. Any constraint on the free flow of energy supplies has far-reaching implications, affecting inflation, trade, industrial production and economic growth across nations. For energy-importing countries such as India, oil price shocks can weaken demand, increase production costs and place additional pressure on economic stability.

History has shown that geopolitical tools that restrict supply chains and trade often carry costs that extend well beyond the parties directly involved. In an interconnected world, economic disruptions rarely remain confined to national borders. It is therefore in the collective interest of all nations to ensure that global trade, particularly in critical commodities such as energy, remains stable and uninterrupted.

Lasting peace may be difficult to achieve, but it remains essential for sustained global prosperity. At a time when economies are striving for growth and resilience, dialogue, cooperation and stability are far more valuable than measures that deepen uncertainty

and economic hardship. The world cannot afford prolonged disruptions when the stakes for growth, development and human welfare are so high.

CONFRONTING JOBLESS GROWTH: INDIA'S MOST URGENT ECONOMIC CHALLENGE

India's economic transformation since the liberalisation of 1991 has been remarkable. The country has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, lifting millions out of poverty and creating new opportunities across sectors. Yet, beneath this success story lies a growing concern—economic growth has not generated enough quality jobs for the millions entering the workforce each year.

As India stands at the threshold of becoming a developed nation, the challenge is not merely to sustain high growth but to make that growth more inclusive and employment-intensive. Millions remain unemployed or underemployed, while wealth and income have become increasingly concentrated among a small segment of society. The aspirations of middle-income households and young job seekers cannot be fulfilled without expanding opportunities for productive employment.

India's demographic dividend, often described as its greatest advantage, is not permanent. The window of opportunity is narrowing. The nation must create sufficient jobs, strengthen skills, promote entrepreneurship, and encourage labour-intensive sectors if it is to become prosperous before it grows old. A strong and expanding middle class is essential for sustainable growth, robust consumption, social

stability, and long-term economic resilience.

In this context, MMA is privileged to host a discussion on the thought-provoking book "*India Out of Work: Rethinking India's Growth Story*" by **Professor Dr. Santosh Mehrotra** and **Jajati Parida**. A distinguished panel of experts will deliberate on this critical issue and explore pathways for creating a more inclusive and employment-oriented growth model.

We cordially invite corporate leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers, academicians, and students to join us or watch the discussion live through webinar at **6.00 p.m. on 22 June 2026**. The deliberations promise valuable insights into one of the most important challenges facing India's future.

As MMA enters its eighth decade of service to the management profession, we seek your partnership in taking the message of leadership, innovation, and managerial excellence to a wider audience. We encourage you to share this special issue of Business Mandate with like-minded professionals, business leaders, entrepreneurs, academicians, and young managers. Every shared idea has the potential to inspire a new leader, transform an organization, and contribute to a stronger nation.

As always, we would be delighted to receive your views, comments, and suggestions.

Happy Reading and Happy Sharing!



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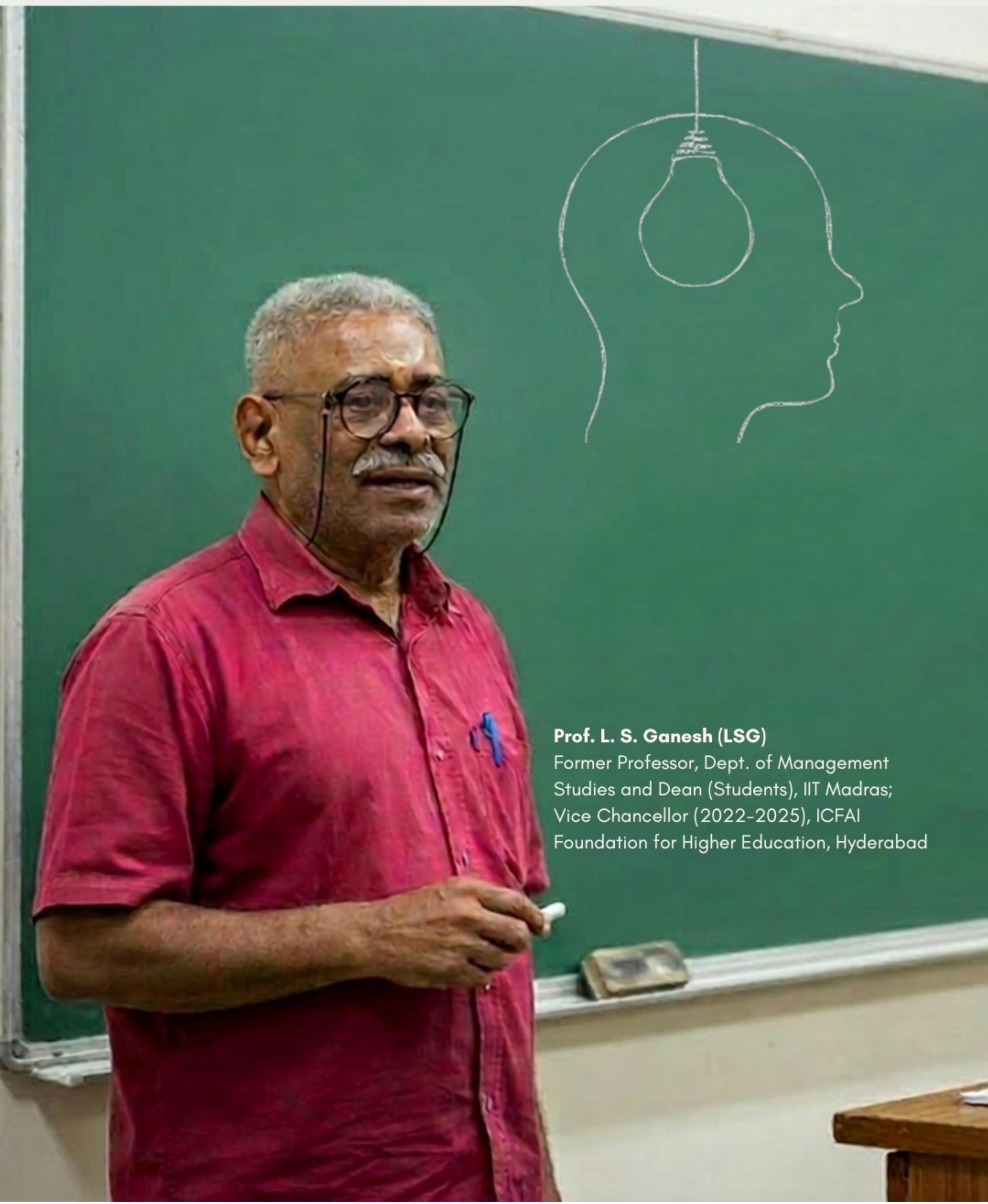
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THE GAME OF LIFE IN THE CLASSROOM

ON PURPOSE, DHARMA, THE
LEARNING CYCLE, AND WHAT
IT TRULY MEANS TO TEACH



Prof. L. S. Ganesh (LSG)

Former Professor, Dept. of Management
Studies and Dean (Students), IIT Madras;
Vice Chancellor (2022-2025), ICFAI
Foundation for Higher Education, Hyderabad

Before I say a single word about classrooms, I want to establish something far more important:

PURPOSE.

We must not violate purpose in our daily lives. Violations SHALL have the due consequences. That's the Law of Karmam and Karmapalangal. Every breath of ours is driven by our Karmapalangal. We will not eat our food in our toilet. We will not use our kitchen as a toilet. Why? Because each space has a clearly defined purpose, and we conform to it by design as well as instinctively. We do not debate it. We don't need committees to decide. The purpose emerges in our minds and becomes self-evident. We set and affirm purpose. We honour and pursue it.

Education is no different. And when we lose sight of its purpose, everything that follows — every lesson plan, every exam, every interaction among teachers, students and parents — becomes confused at best, and actively harmful at worst.

So what is the Purpose of Education?

Our tradition, refined over centuries and rooted in our own land, has a clear, generic answer:

to enable the individual human being to perform Karmam while pursuing their chosen Dharmam.

Dharmam is not something we achieve once and possess forever — it is something we intend and commit to pursue. The pursuit itself is the point, and

it happens through our Karmam or actions: through thought, expression, and deed, moment to moment, and across an entire lifetime.

This is the foundation.

Without Dharmam (for guidance) and the due Karmam (for guided action), no discussion of classroom management, teaching technique or student engagement will have any real grounding in our Education systems at large

“One of the worst acts of Adharmam is when we violate our own chosen purpose. Unintentionally is a mistake; intentionally is SIN!”

THREE QUESTIONS TO TEST THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE ARE EDUCATED

From this foundation, let us pose three questions with their respective corollaries. Not rhetorical ones, but questions we should actually own, internalize and answer with integrity, throughout our lives, and for ourselves.

The first is: am I at **peace with myself**? And the corollary: am I at peace with the rest of the world and the universe? This is critical because the extent to which we are not at peace with ourselves is the precise extent to which we are not educated. Period. If we cannot find peace within ourselves, with what authority can we claim to be sufficiently educated?

I will confess openly — I am a very ordinary human being with a considerably large ego. Honestly. The only thing I can support myself with is that I am willing to confess publicly. Am I winning the struggle



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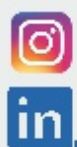
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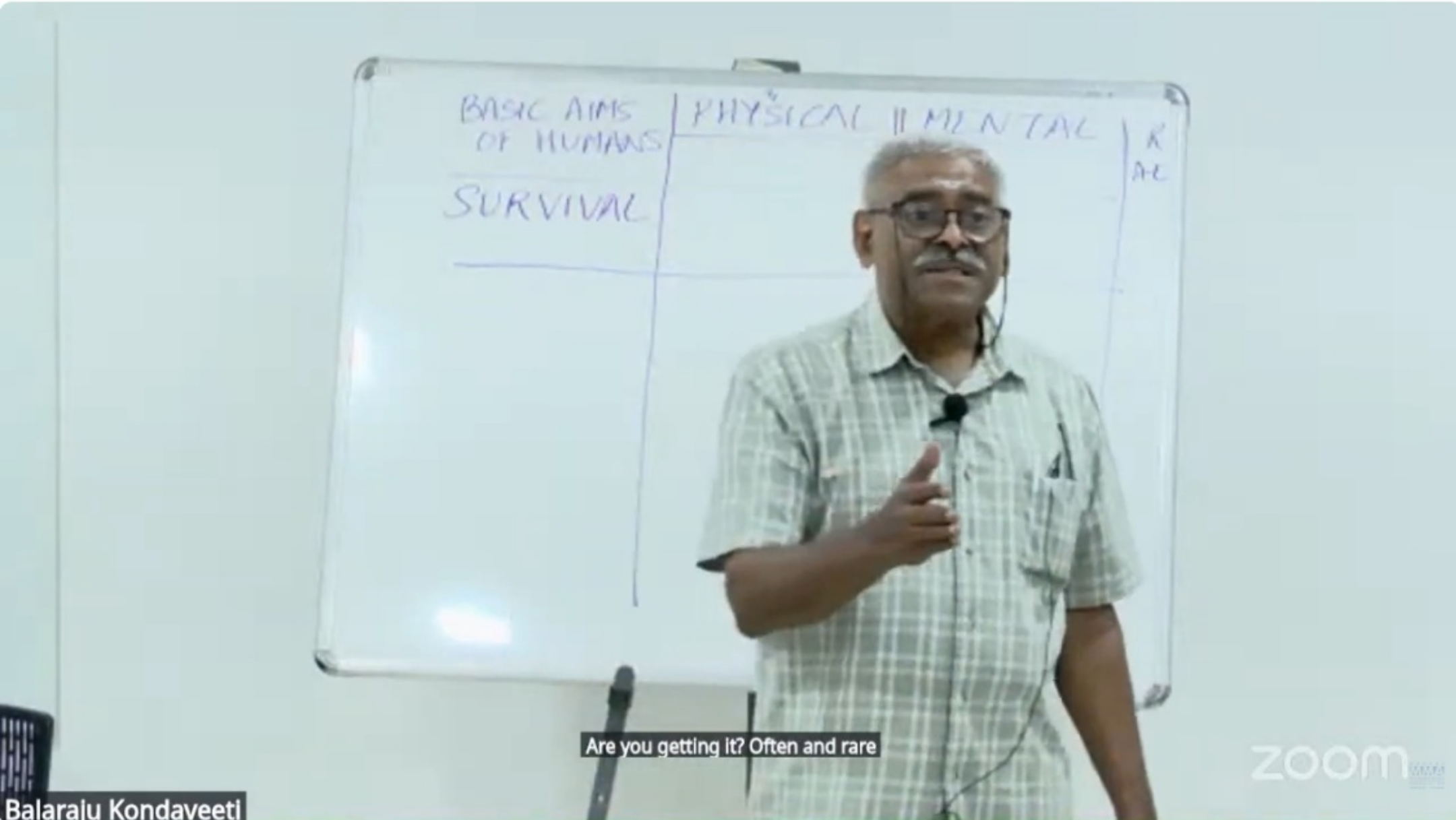
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against my ego? No. I fail far more often than I succeed. But I keep struggling. That is all any of us can do.

The second question: am I **holding my dignity, grace and honour intact** while I live as a human being? And the corollary: am I enabling others to hold their dignity, grace and honour intact? Not only do we maintain our own dignity, grace, and honour, we should actively help others maintain theirs. These are not mere virtues. They are a responsibility that we should fulfil because of being educated.

The third question: am I **struggling for fulfilment** in my life, every moment, every day, every month, and every year across my lifetime? Note the word struggling. In the Indian context of education, it is not a sign of failure — it is a sign of genuine, persistent engagement. The greatest souls that lived on our planet— from Gautama Buddha to Lord Jesus and onwards to Ramana Maharishi with so many in between — demonstrated this path: they lived with fulfilment through pursuit of purpose (Divine?) and

guided others to struggle for theirs. That is the full arc of what a teacher ought to do and be.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO? THE “6-S” FRAMEWORK OF THE GAME OF LIFE

To understand why we educate, and why students should learn, I use what I call the “**6-S Framework**” (**6-SF**) to reflect the ‘**Game of Life**’ that ALL of us play, whether we like it or not. The 6-SF answers the question: what are the **basic aims** of human life? Because once we can answer that honestly, we are only one step away from answering any other question, including why anyone should sit in a classroom for learning.

The six **basic aims**, which are logically sequenced and apply in the **physical and mental** contexts of our existence, are: **Survival, Stability, Strength, Success, Superiority, and Sustainability**. The last one cuts across the first five.

We should note specially that we are also referring to the ‘**quality**’ and ‘**efficiency**’ of our realizing these six basic aims in addition to their nominal realization.

We seek to realize these **basic aims** via both involuntary or automatic and voluntary or judicious choices of **Action-Experiences** (A-E). The A-E are performed using, **Resources** (‘R’ – Natural and Human-made) under specific **Conditions** (‘C’ – self-imposed and external). Essentially, we use combinations of A-E, R, and C, each of which can be classified as being **Vital** (V), **Essential** (E), or **Desirable** (D), for realizing our **basic aims**.

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The **Vital** ones are those without which our **basic aims** cannot be realized at all — impossible.

Essential ones are those combinations without which we can realize our **basic aims**, but with lowered quality and efficiency.

Desirable ones are those that are not strictly necessary and we can realize our **basic aims** without them, and as originally intended. However, we also enjoy some temporary conveniences because of them.

The common ballpoint pen having three parts – the refill, the body (with screw-on tip and/or back stoppers), and a cap – can serve as an operational example. Other morphological structural manifestations of ballpoint pens exist.

The **refill is Vital**, because without it we cannot write ordinarily or commonly or normally or typically or generally. Yes, exceptional situations do exist when writing can happen without a refill. But, we should use our finer judgement to distinguish between ordinary and extraordinary, common and uncommon, normal and not normal, typical and atypical, the rule and the exception, and so on depending upon the circumstances.

The golden rule is: “**Treat exceptions exceptionally**; never use rules or policies under exceptional circumstances.

The body of the pen is Essential — you can hold a refill and write, but the quality and efficiency of writing will be poorer.

The cap is Desirable — quite useful, but we can write effectively without it.

Vital – Essential – Desirable (V-E-D). Teach your children the finer distinction and you will have given them one of the most practical tools for managing their time, their priorities and their lives. Also, teach them to use their judgement to distinguish between ordinary and extraordinary, common and uncommon, normal and not normal, typical and atypical, the rule and the exception, and so on in their lives.

Now, let's take the first **basic aim, Survival**, particularly the **'physical context'** The A-E of 'breathing' is Vital even in the short term — absence of 'breathing' will imply non-realization of 'Survival', and the time duration when one does not or cannot breathe will have varying effects depending upon the individual. Kate Winslet of Titanic fame demonstrated astonishing breath control under water for a little over seven minutes! Please don't try such agonizing and life-threatening stunts driven by EGO. I'll surface desperately for breath from under water in just about 30 seconds. So, we are measuring the definite negative consequences of absence of breathing in only seconds and minutes commonly. Hence, the A-E of 'breathing' is Vital. It requires the 'R' and 'C' of 'air' and 'good/clean' respectively. We should note that the air one breathes, say in New Delhi, will not kill immediately, but will definitely cause long-term undesirable consequences. Next, the A-E of 'sleep' is also Vital because without it, within fifty to sixty hours commonly we begin to gradually lose control of our minds; one may not notice it, but others around can and will. Water and food (R) are Vital in the long-term, relatively speaking. One can survive without any water for about seven to ten days and without any food and

with only hydration, for about a month or two.

We should note that here we must distinguish between the short-term (ST) and the long-term (LT). The A-E of breathing (minutes) and sleep (hours) are Vital for Survival even in the ST, while the A-E of drinking water (days) and eating food (weeks) are Vital in the LT, relatively speaking. Just as we consider the effects of the absence of breathing on 'Survival', we should consider the effects of the presence of deadly, undiscoverable poison (actually an 'R' in a wider context) in our water or food. This way, we can account comprehensively for all A-E, R, and C in the context of our lives with reference to both, their presence and absence in the ST and the LT.

Physical exercise (an A-E) is Essential for us: we can survive without engaging in this A-E, but the quality of our Survival will suffer without it, especially in the LT.

Chocolate ice cream (an 'R') is Desirable. We can easily 'survive' without it, but we enjoy having it, especially on hot summer days.

Turning our attention to the '**mental context**' of our Survival, we note that 'sleep' (an 'A-E') is also Vital for our minds. 'Blood flow' (an automatic 'A-E') is Vital for both 'physical' and 'mental' survival. 'Absence of 'intense mental torture' is Vital for mental survival, even in the ST.

Mind-bending Exercise: Try and identify more such A-E, R, and C combinations for your 'mental' Survival and classify the combinations as V, E, or D in the ST and LT. Clue: How would you classify 'solitude', 'friendship', 'humour', 'prayer', 'watching a movie',

‘listening to music’, ‘smoking a cigarette’, ‘watching the vast ocean’, ‘going on a picnic’, ‘a romantic relationship’, and so on?

Now apply the same thinking further onto the next basic aim, **‘Stability’** of body and mind, and then further onto the next, **‘Strength’**. We can easily observe that the same combinations of A-E, R, and C will hold good, but often with greater importance or even a shift from LT to ST, depending upon the individual indulging in this self-examination. We should note that ‘Stability’ will be relevant only when ‘Survival’ is realized, and ‘Strength’ will be relevant only after ‘Stability’ is realized. How can one be ‘Strong’ and ‘Surviving’ without ‘Stability’ of body and/or mind? This includes the ‘quality’ and ‘efficiency’ aspects. We can also note that the framework is dynamic and adaptive too. The A-E, R, and C that would be V, E, or D when we are twenty years old may not be rated the same when we are forty and then at sixty. Our life stages change the picture entirely.

“Never generalize in our worldly sense. Generalization is the refuge of the intellectually challenged.”

The first three aims — Survival, Stability, and Strength — are ‘self-referenced’ and ‘value-independent’. We know whether we are Surviving, alive and kicking. We are direct experiencers of the Stability and Strength of our body and mind, and even reveal

our status. Hence, ‘self-referenced’. Also, there are a number of observable and openly verifiable common criteria to ‘test’ and ‘evaluate’ our Survival probability, state of Stability and Strength of our body and mind. Hence, ‘value-independent’. We do not need anyone else other than the professional ‘testers’ and ‘evaluators’ to confirm our ‘state’ of being.

The next three — **Success, Superiority, and Sustainability** — are ‘value-dependent’ and ‘externally referenced’. What is Success for one may be failure for another. The criteria of Success, Superiority, and Sustainability are verifiably more subjective and are likely to be debated, perhaps eternally too. The criteria include money and influence, power and authority, popularity and fame, solitude and peace and so on. At the extreme, we even have individuals for whom securing the next morsel of food would be ‘Success’.

Overall and essentially, we seek to realize Sustainable, Successful, Strong, and Stable Survival. Superior, if feasible. However, the truth worth internalizing is that history provides solid evidence that no individual, no organisation, no nation or even civilization has ever realized Sustainable Superiority on earth. Not one. The Game of Life makes it impossible due to that fantastic **Universal and Eternal ‘Law of Change’: Everything shall change, including the Law!** Even the way ‘Change’ changes also changes!

The 6-SF is applicable to the Games of Life played at three distinct levels of human systems:

1. the Individual (you and me) at the micro-level,
2. Social Units (on the social track from our

families, communities, to sects, etc., , and on the organizational track from our business organizations to Governments) at the meso-level, and

3. entire Nations, Societies, and even Civilizations at the macro-level.

THE LEARNING CYCLE FROM UNCONSCIOUS IGNORANCE TO BLISSFUL SILENCE: BEYOND PROFESSOR RAYMOND BLOOM

Now let us come directly into the classroom. All learning begins with “**Unconscious Ignorance**” (UI), the state of knowledge signifying “I don’t know that I don’t know”. This is precisely where the teacher's Dharmam begins. Students who are ignorant of their ignorance should be nudged by their teachers into “**Conscious Ignorance**” (CI) the next state of knowledge, signifying “I know that I don’t know”. This shift can be effected by nudging the students to refer back to the **6-SF** and the **A-E, R, and C combinations** required for realizing the applicable and relevant **basic aims** of their own lives. This is referred to as making them learn with “Skin in the Game”. This kindles their curiosity and the corresponding motivation to learn. Once ignited, curiosity is the engine that generates genuine hunger to know and drives further learning. This effort is an integral part of the Dharmam of the teacher.

Teachers who intentionally smother students’ curiosity are intellectual and professional failures (villains?). Often such teachers (sic!) use rigid authority combined with contempt or for the students’ questions, and sometimes even fear. They are harmful

to the system as a whole. We should note that good teachers multiply through their students. But, bad teachers multiply more, not uncommonly.

From CI, the student moves through four stages. The first is **Awareness** — the ability to observe, identify, recognize, label, categorize, and give a gross/macro-level general description of a physical or conceptual entity. This corresponds to specific ‘Action Verbs’ specified in Bloom’s Taxonomy. Thus, the Learning Cycle cryptically presented in Indian Knowledge Systems can and should be effectively integrated with Bloom’s Taxonomy. Students can and should be tested for ‘Awareness’. Can they identify ‘an entity? Can they name/label ‘it’? Can they categorize ‘it’? Can they provide a gross description? Essentially, ‘Awareness’ enables students to respond to the “What”, and “Who” questions with reference to the ‘entity’ being studied.

The second stage is **Familiarity** — the ability to describe in increasing detail, to elaborate, to characterize, to estimate, and even attempt early or crude predictions or anticipation of the entity’s features and behaviour. For example, we were aware of “Education”. Now, we are more familiar with it in terms of its Dharmic context and Karmic implications. We are also aware of the 6-SF, which underlies Education’s practical philosophy and purpose in human life. Essentially, ‘Familiarity’ involves knowledge of the ‘entity’ in addition to the “What” and “Who” questions and gaining knowledge on the “Where” and “When” questions as well.

The third stage is **Understanding** — the ability to explain and answer the “How” and “Why” questions.

Not just “what” or “who” an entity is, and not just the “where” and “when” questions concerning its existence, but also the “how” and “why” of the entity’s existence, significance, characteristics, behaviour, and relationships. Students who can provide clear, cogent, and comprehensive explanations concerning an entity would have demonstrated their ‘Understanding’, which also enables them to make relatively more accurate predictions about the entity and even attempt to ‘control’ its behaviour. For example, “How” and “Why” does a principle or concept matter and hold? What are its fundamental governing principles and implications?

The fourth and most critical, but ‘lost’ stage is **Internalization**. This is the penultimate step to Mastery. Through ‘Internalization’, we no longer think explicitly about our learning and knowledge consciously — it moves through us and what we know becomes a part of our breath and blood flow. Imagine a great musician rendering a raagam spontaneously in a concert, freely and with blissful abandon. Living in the moment. Such uncanny freedom cannot come from talent alone. It emerges from months and years of ‘Internalization’ of the grammar and the soul of the raagam, practising it again and again and again until it ceases to be something separate from us and becomes integral to us. Imagine Cristiano Ronaldo playing football. Novak Djokovic playing Tennis. Sachin Tendulkar batting. Vaibhav Suryavanshi at the crease in this edition of IPL. Bhimsen Joshi rendering the Shuddha Kalyan raagam. A. R. Rahman composing music. The actions and responses are intuitive, spontaneous and amazing. We cannot enjoy such

freedom without 'Internalization'. It is the same in teaching, in mathematics, in medicine, ... actually in every field of human endeavour. This is referred to in Indian Knowledge Systems as "Nidhidhyaasanam" (meaning, Internalization through Meditation or committed repetitive practice). This is the guarantee of "Practice makes one perfect".

"Real freedom in action comes from Internalization. We are so damn good at what we are doing that we act spontaneously and with complete ease."

Moving beyond **Conscious Mastery (CM)** or the state "We know that we know", **SubConscious Mastery** emerges from persistent 'Internalization'. And beyond that, in our Indian knowledge tradition, is a stage that I can only call **Silence**. The teacher who has reached that point does not need to speak to share knowledge. Ramana Maharishi, the Sage of Thiruvanaamalai, was that kind of a guru. Hundreds of people have testified that they went to him burdened with questions about life and left experiencing his silent, wise smile and answers he never verbally gave. They simply sat in his presence and something shifted. That is the absolute outer limit or ideal of what teaching can become. We may not reach that state ever, but we should know that it exists. It reframes our Dharmam and reconfigures our Karmam. It indicates divine inspiration for us teachers.

WHAT TO ASSESS VIA TESTING AND EVALUATION? HOW?

On practical assessment: We should test and evaluate our students across four dimensions of learning effectiveness. Two modes – unassisted and assisted – are relevant in our tests. The latter involves giving clues to students, especially when the test questions would be difficult.

- 1. Memory** — the students' capability to recall knowledge unassisted and assisted (involves giving clues). Memory is vital and not a lesser skill. Anyone who tells you memorizing is unimportant is ignorant of how 'Internalization' works. Memory is the soil in which Mastery can possibly grow. Neither underplay it, nor overplay it. Balanced testing of memory is key.
- 2. Application** — the student's capability to use knowledge from one context to effectively succeed in a different but related context. For example, swimming in a village well, navigating a public swimming pool, bathing in a river, and near shore frolicking in the sea are not the same. Knowledge of floating and swimming should be 'applied' across the situations. Application demands creative thinking and judgment.
- 3. Imagination** — the student's capability to creatively use knowledge and produce novel, creative work outputs, including solutions to problems or even posing newer, never-before problems. Two types of Imagination exist – Grounded, and Generative (aka "Free Flight"). The first is grounded in existing knowledge to synergize newly discovered or identified entities including experiences. The

second generates entirely novel entities including non-real ones.

4. **Questioning** — the student's capability to use Critical Thinking and pose interesting questions to lead to fresh insights about entities. In fact, we should enhance our students' potential to raise questions since we know the proverb, "a good question is worth more than a thousand answers". This should be done by imparting "Critical Thinking" education to our students. We should note that all research works are based on questioning the existing research literature.

For superior 'Assessment', diligently integrate the 'Action Verbs' associated with Bloom's Taxonomy with the above four dimensions. The traditional cryptic model of Shraavanam (listening with focus), Mananam (reflecting deeply) and Nidhidhyaasanam



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<u>HR COMPLIANCE IN PRACTICE</u> 13th June 2026 10:00 AM to 05:30 PM MMA Management Center	<u>DPDP COMPLIANCE IN AI USAGE</u> 27th June 2026 10:00 AM to 05:30 PM MMA Management Center

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(Internalizing via Meditating) is prescribed in Indian Knowledge Systems, particularly in the context of the process of gaining spiritual mastery. Our ancient philosophers understood this learning cycle aeons before it was formalized in the West. As explained above, we can easily adapt our traditional model to our contemporary Education Systems that are grounded in the world we live in, and not necessarily to the spiritual world. When we integrate the two, we derive a potent and powerful resource for our classrooms.

One final principle, and perhaps the most important: Our primary Dharmam as teachers begins with ourselves. We should be vessels of knowledge abundance while noting that we cannot pour sufficiently from lesser vessels and certainly not from an empty vessel. Taking care of our own body and mind is an imperative and not a casual affair., It is the precondition for everything else we do. We should be at war with ourselves in order to be intellectually strong or may be even superior, for the sake of shaping the character and building the competence of our students. Our primary Dharmam is to be 'self-caring'. Only then we will be able to fulfil our greater Dharmam of taking care of others, and especially our students. My Dharmam, yours, and every teacher's in this room and online is to support each other and everyone else to play the Game of Life with the ultimate ideal of ensuring peace and harmony for one and all always and everywhere while upholding integrity and dignity. If this is not the Purpose of Education, then what is? Om Shanthih! Shanthih! Shanthih! ■



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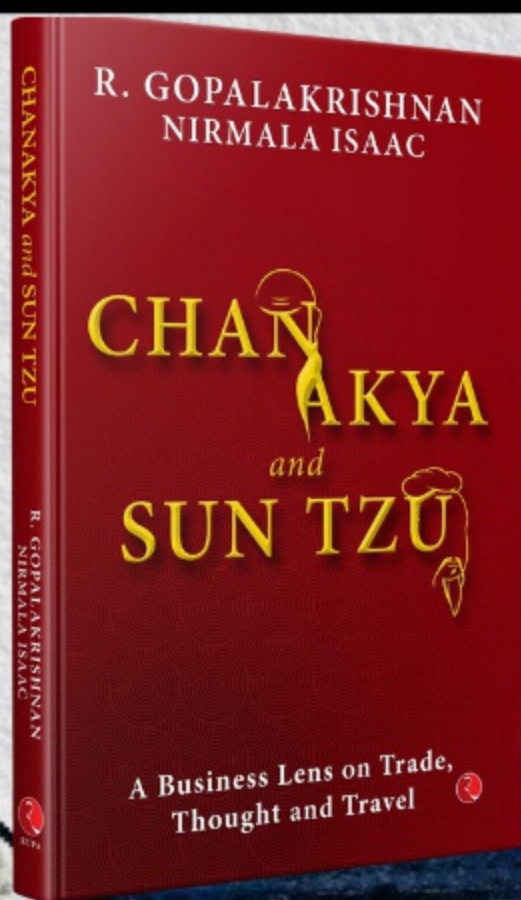
GREAT IDEAS

INNOVATION

**NOMINATION ENDS ON:
MONDAY, 22 JUNE 2026**

REIMAGINING AN ANCIENT RELATIONSHIP

DISCUSSION
ON THE BOOK



R Gopalakrishnan
Author & Former Executive
Director, Tata Sons Ltd



Nirmala Isaac
Co-Author
Doctoral Scholar, SPJIMR Mumbai



Shastri Ramachandaran
Independent Journalist, Editor &
Media Consultant

The discussion on the book explores how long-standing exchanges in trade, travel and ideas can shape future economic cooperation, leadership thinking and regional development.

R Gopalakrishnan

Author & Former Executive Director, Tata Sons Ltd

The more I talk about this book to outsiders, the more I feel it is important to point out that the subject — whether you agree with our book or not — is one of the most important for India in the coming thirty years. If we do not get clarity in our minds as to how India and China are going to work together, or if we continue to look at China only as a competitor rather than as a potential collaborator, then I think we are going to miss something vital in the vision of Viksit Bharat.

A lay person looking at the title might assume the book is about the philosophy of Chanakya and the philosophy of Sun Tzu. It is not. We could well have called it 'India and China,' but marketing has taught me that a little twist in the title helps. The subtitle gives away the plot: it is a business lens on what we call the three T's — Trade, Travel and Thought. I consider it one of the most important perspectives that has rarely been expressed, because businessmen



are trained to do one thing: look at a customer, assess what they need, place it in context, and then service it. Business people are naturally trained in what I call competitive collaboration. I may compete with you, but I can also collaborate with you — these are not mutually exclusive.

During my great-grandfather's time, India and China together accounted for fifty percent of world GDP. That dwindled under our very noses, but it is now picking up for the first time, at different paces, in both countries. Consider the Valeriepieris circle — a circle drawn from a point in Myanmar with a radius of about three thousand kilometres. It encompasses much of China, much of India, parts of Siberia and Indonesia. More than half the people on this planet live within this circle, yet it covers only fifteen percent of the land area. If you lived in Bombay as I have for much of my life, you learn very quickly to get along

If you cannot be friendly, at least do not be an enemy. Learn to be frenemies. China and India were at the same place economically in 1980. Now China is five times bigger.

with your neighbours — whether you like them or not.

China is not going to go away. It will be your neighbour forever. In Bombay, we have learned one thing: you had better be friendly with your neighbour. If you cannot be friendly, at least do not be an enemy. Learn to be frenemies. China and India were at the same place economically in 1980. Now China is five times bigger. Yet we need EVs, solar panels, and artificial intelligence. Near Nellore, there is a footwear factory called Apache Footwear — from twenty thousand pairs a month it has grown to production for two hundred million pairs for export. Why must it be entirely Chinese? Why cannot we do it with our own footwear people? There are many such examples, not just in high-tech. India should invest the time required to change the mindset — from saying we are competitors, to letting business carry on while the border conversation continues separately.

Nirmala Isaac

Co-Author; Doctoral Scholar in Organisational Behaviour, SPJIMR Mumbai

This is Gopal Sir's twenty-first book and my very first, so if I fumble, please excuse me. When we started writing, I thought I was adequately informed. But the deeper I went into the literature, the more I realised I was very far from that. The relationship between India and China, when looked at through a modern lens — the last hundred years of geopolitics, border tensions, economics, even racism — is easy to get lost in. But the more I read, the more I realised that is just a blip in the long history of these two civilisations. One reader described our book as taking

a helicopter ride through that long history. Let me take you on a short ride.

About two thousand years ago, in the northern plains of India, small kingdoms were rising and falling when an unlikely strategist called Chanakya stepped in. Legend tells us that after being humiliated at the court of a Nanda ruler, Chanakya untied the knot of hair on his head and issued an ultimatum: the next time he tied it, the king would no longer rule. He encountered Chandragupta Maurya — young, ambitious but in need of guidance — and together they overthrew the Nanda ruler. Chanakya then built not just a kingdom but a system: rules, regulations, law and order. He knew what remains true even today — exchange happens only in times of stability and not in times of chaos.

Ashoka's transformation at the battlefield of Kalinga is another building block. Witnessing the dead and the weeping women, he felt remorse so deep that he turned to dharma and Buddhism. It was during his reign that Buddhism spread through the Mauryan Empire, into Central Asia, and then into China — one of the first bridges between the two civilisations. A few centuries later, a young Chinese monk named Xuanzang quietly left his homeland in 629 CE. He had heard about Buddhism from monks who had travelled from India and wanted to learn from the very source. He made the long arduous journey across Central Asia to Nalanda — one of the ancient world's great universities — and spent more than a decade there, learning Sanskrit and Buddhist philosophy, eventually returning with hundreds of manuscripts.

One of my favourite characters to write about was

Empress Wu — the only woman in Chinese history to rule as emperor. Under her reign, Buddhist institutions flourished: temples, translations, scholarly debates. Her story reminds us that ideas do not survive on inspiration alone. Sometimes they need monks, scholars, and systemic support. If Xuanzang represented China's curiosity for Indian philosophy, Empress Wu represented institutional support. When you place these stories together — Chandragupta building political order, Ashoka spreading ideas, Xuanzang travelling for knowledge, and maritime exchanges linking ports across Asia — a pattern emerges. For centuries, the relationship between India and China was built on small, subtle exchanges of trade, travel and thought. Strategy is not just about conflict. The one takeaway from our book: we have to play the long game.

Shastri Ramachandaran

Independent Journalist, Editor, Writer & Media Consultant

I want to felicitate Mr Gopal and Ms Nirmala on a truly marvellous book — one of the finest books on China I have read in the last eighteen years, in which I have read far more books on China than all the other books I have ever read combined. What strikes me most is this: it would be very difficult for many people to read those books, distil the truth from their complexity, their depth, the many warps and wefts of history, civilisational issues, culture, prejudice. This book I would hold up as among the few I would recommend to anyone wanting to understand China — especially every Indian.

<p>MON, 1 JUN 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER</p>	<p>BUILDING HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS: LESSONS FROM MILITARY LEADERSHIP AND LARGE-SCALE OPERATIONS</p>
<p>WED, 10 JUN 11:00 am to 1:00 pm HAND IN HAND ACADEMY, KANCHEEPURAM</p>	<p>AI FOR EVERYONE - AT KANCHEEPURAM</p>
<p>THU, 11 JUN 6:00 pm to 7:15 pm VASANTA VIHAR, KFI</p>	<p>MMA-KFI LEADING WITH AWARENESS - A DIALOGUE SERIES (AT KRISHNAMURTI FOUNDATION INDIA)</p>
<p>SAT, 13 JUN 6:15 pm to 7:30 pm TANISHQ, ANNA NAGAR</p>	<p>TIMELINKS GOLDEN EDGE SERIES LECTURE MANAGEMENT & LIFE LESSONS FROM MOVIES</p>
<p>MON, 15 JUN 6:30 pm to 8:15 pm MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER</p>	<p>MMA- CPCL LEADERSHIP INAUGURAL MEMORIAL LECTURE PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP IN NATION BUILDING: FROM LEGACY TO FUTURE READINESS</p>
<p>MON, 22 JUN 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER</p>	<p>LAUNCH & DISCUSSION ON THE BOOK INDIA OUT OF WORK: RETHINKING INDIA'S GROWTH STORY</p>
<p>WED, 24 JUN 6:00 pm to 7:15 pm MMA MANAGEMENT CENTER</p>	<p>READ & GROW SERIES SWITCH: HOW TO CHANGE THINGS WHEN CHANGE IS HARD</p>
<p>WED, 24 JUN 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm ANDHRA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE</p>	<p>LECTURE AT ANDHRA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE</p>

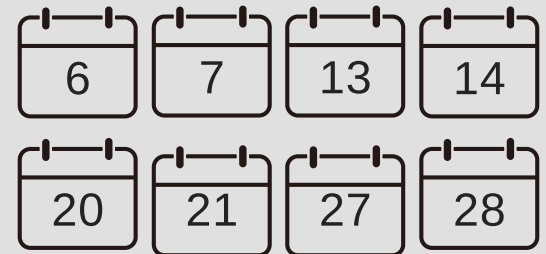
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Navigating Global Supply Chains Amid Shifting Geopolitics
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Dr P S Srinivas | Dr Frank N Pleke | Josh Foulger | Manoj Joseph

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READ & GROW
The Hard Thing about Hard Thing
Building a Business When There are No Easy Answers
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Better Never Stops
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Prof L S Ganesh

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What this book does instead is remind us, chapter by chapter, of a profound truth: India and China have far, far more in common to hold them together than the differences that divide them — differences that are very recent, not even colonial or postcolonial.

The second thing that makes this book exceptional is what it deliberately avoids. Everyone is obsessed with the border dispute or the boundary issue. I think it is a futile exercise to go on writing about it, speculating, debating, because eventually the state will decide — and the state has far more information than anyone else. The political leadership will decide not based on knowledge or insight but on what may work at a particular point in history. A G Noorani wrote that Nehru was held hostage by a divided cabinet, an irresponsible opposition, an uninformed press, and a restive parliament — all fed on bad history. I think we are still held hostage to the same thing.

Only people who have been in Bombay and away from Delhi could have written a book like this. Anyone based in Delhi, caught in that bureaucratic, diplomatic, militarised perception of China, could not have. Discussions on India-China in Delhi are always about militarisation, financialisation, deficits. What this book does instead is remind us, chapter by chapter, of a profound truth: India and China have far, far more in common to hold them together than the differences that divide them — differences that are very recent, not even colonial or postcolonial. And there is now the scholarship from Jindal Global University suggesting that the entire 1962 war was incited and sustained by

the CIA because the United States wanted to keep these two countries at odds.

I ask: how much of this conflict is manufactured? It would be interesting to reflect on whether we have truly become a post-colonial society, or whether we are still trapped in a colonial perception of China as an enemy. Every chapter of this book underscores what I have also been struck by almost obsessively — that the relationship between India and China, for two thousand years, had no conflict. Common civilisation values, common heritage, common interests — none of these ever allowed for bilateral disputes until the 1940s and 1950s. Something changed. The question is whether it changed on its own, or was manufactured.



Q&A

How can integrating Chanakya's wisdom and Sun Tzu's strategy help India produce better management professionals?

R Gopalakrishnan: The Chinese have a tremendous regard for history. When Xi Jinping addressed the CPC meeting, he quoted Sun Tzu and said the best battles are the ones you don't fight. Mao quoted Confucius. So their deep respect for history runs very deep. As it happens, so does ours. Rather than taking down Chanakya Niti and Sun Tzu page by page, if you take

this as a broad civilisational orientation — that there is wisdom embedded in our histories that shapes how we think, manage, and negotiate — you will probably come to the right answer. The book is not really about ancient philosophy; we used those names partly as a title with a bit of marketing in mind. The important point is that deep-rooted civilisational influences are working in our minds whether we know it or not — it may be the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, a story your grandmother told you.

Nirmala Isaac: I can add that in management education today, The Art of War and Chanakya Niti are already required reading in many strategic management courses. That prevalence is recognition that these frameworks carry enduring practical relevance.

As co-author with a strong HR and organisational behaviour background, how did you translate historical insights into people and leadership practice?

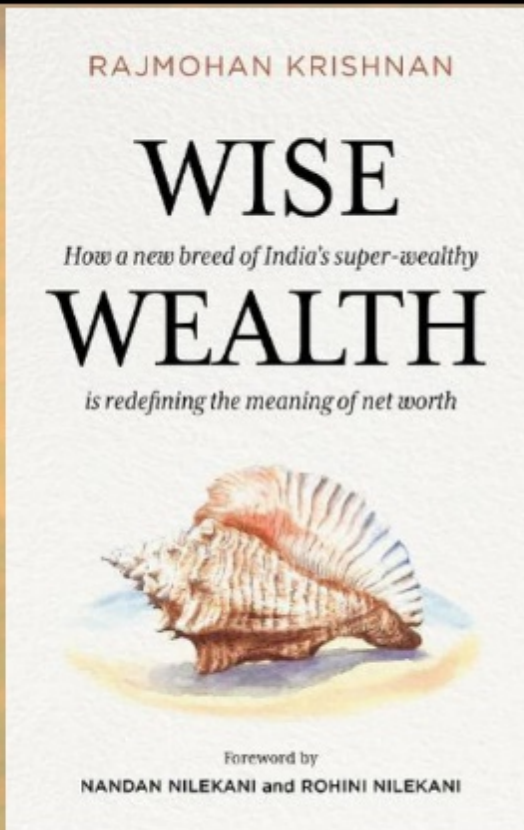
Nirmala Isaac: To be honest, I did not bring a great deal of HR perspective into the book — except perhaps in talking about exchange and engagement. More than people practices, this book speaks to leadership through the lens of Chanakya Niti and The Art of War. But fundamentally, this is not an HR-oriented book. What I brought was a researcher's curiosity — I was startled repeatedly by how little I knew when I thought I knew enough, and that humility drove the depth of the historical research behind it.

From your extensive experience covering China and South Asia, how do you view the current trajectory of India-China relations?

Shastri Ramachandaran: India-China relations will find their own level regardless of what the states and governments do. Let me give you a concrete example. There is almost no major construction taking place anywhere in India where goods are not imported from China — from sanitary ware to nails and nuts and bolts. A hotelier from Karnataka told me he sources everything for his three-star hotel from Guangzhou, with delivery to Bangalore costing just a thousand dollars. Meanwhile, Chinese LED lights have illuminated rural India in a way no domestic industry managed for decades. Trade is like water — put an obstacle in front of it and it finds its way around. Neither the Indian nor the Chinese state is particularly interested in people of the two countries really coming close — banning apps after Galwan hurt the young Indians who earned their living on TikTok, while TikTok itself went on to do excellent business in America. The geopolitical noise is loud, but at the ground level, exchange is already happening and will keep happening. The question for Indian managers is whether they are positioned to be part of it. ■

TURNING PROSPERITY INTO PURPOSE, STEWARDSHIP AND LEGACY

DISCUSSION ON THE BOOK



Geetanjali Vikram Kirloskar
Chairperson & Managing Director
Kirloskar Systems Pvt Ltd



Rajmohan Krishnan
Principal Founder & Managing
Director, Entrust Family Office

Wealth finds its highest purpose when guided by values, planned with foresight, and shared responsibly across generations for societal good.

Rajmohan Krishnan

Principal Founder & MD, Entrust Family Office |
Author, *Wise Wealth*

When people hear the title *Wise Wealth*, they may assume this is a book about money. It is — but only in part. More truthfully, it is a book about judgment, values, responsibility, and the kind of human being one becomes while creating, preserving, and giving away wealth. Over the years, through many conversations with families, entrepreneurs, investors, and philanthropists, I found myself returning to the same question: not how much wealth we create, but what wealth does to us and through us. Does it deepen our sense of responsibility, or only enlarge our sense of entitlement? Does it strengthen families and institutions, or quietly weaken them? *Wise Wealth* was born from that inquiry. It is also, in a very personal sense, born from gratitude — to the many individuals who gave their names, their honesty, and their trust to this effort.

This book brings together the voices of 35 remarkable leaders from business, finance,



philanthropy, healthcare, law, culture, and social impact. None of them speaks of wealth as something merely to be possessed. They speak of it as something to be handled with thought, discipline, and conscience. It asks harder and more useful questions: What is enough? What should be preserved? What should be shared? How do families transmit values and not just assets? How do we build institutions that outlast personalities? How do we give in a way that is thoughtful rather than performative? Since we are honoured to have Ms Geetanjali Vikram Kirloskar with us, I want to acknowledge Mr Vikram Kirloskar with particular affection — a mentor, a guide, and one of the earliest customers of Entrust. His chapter in the book captures with rare clarity the power of discipline, restraint, and staying grounded through every season of life.

The leaders featured in this book — despite all their achievements — repeatedly return to ideas that are deeply human: humility, family, adversity, integrity, patience, trusteeship, and long-term thinking. The awareness that success without values

eventually becomes fragile. Wealth is not tested only in moments of growth. It is tested in succession, in restraint, in generosity, and in whether it enlarges the family and society around it — or only the self. I hope this book does not merely inform. I hope it provokes reflection — encouraging founders, inheritors, professionals, and young readers to think more deeply about wealth. Not just how it is made, but how it is lived. My hope is simple: that *Wise Wealth* adds, in a small but meaningful way, to India's conversation on enterprise, ethics, legacy, philanthropy, and the future of responsible wealth.

Geetanjali Vikram Kirloskar

Chairperson & MD, Kirloskar Systems Pvt Ltd

Wealth is not just a personal achievement. It becomes a social responsibility. You get the power to influence lives beyond your own. Wealth is not about possession — it is about purpose. You need to grow your wealth to sustain yourself. Then you grow yourself, and finally, you give yourself. It is important to deploy wealth with a sense of responsibility, ethically and with sustainable practices. In our pursuit of expanding wealth — whether in a legacy business, a startup, or as an entrepreneur — keeping the ethics of building wealth in mind is where everything starts. And the starting point, always, is character. The values you build your enterprise on are the values that will define your legacy long after the enterprise itself has passed through many hands.

Giving is not loss. It is circulation. Strong societies create strong economies. When you invest and deploy

your wealth wisely and responsibly, you are building a legacy — a true value of your wealth — one that outlives you. Wealth grows in value when it creates value for others. Today, stakeholders — investors, vendors, partners — look at ethics, governance, and sustainable practices. Many companies go beyond the CSR percentage the law requires, engaging with communities and giving from personal wealth. Philanthropic attitude has become a genuine measure of a corporation's true worth. But giving should never be guilt alleviation. Luxury is not a bad word. Wealth is not a bad word — in creating it, you are providing employment to millions. At some point, though, you step back and ask how to circulate a part of it back to the community — not only for reputation, but from the heart.

This book is special because it brings together personal conversations with 35 prominent Indian business leaders. That intimacy makes a huge difference to the insights on how successful individuals think — about entrepreneurship, family values, governance, and philanthropy. What moves me most is that these leaders speak not just about strategy but about the human cost of getting it wrong — relationships strained, families divided, legacies undone — and the quiet satisfaction of getting it right across generations. I haven't heard a phrase coined so beautifully — we are not talking about wealth and giving in the clichéd sense, but about wealth that is distributed and given back wisely. Wise Wealth. ■

Panel Discussion

Sreepriya NS, Co-Founder & CEO, Entrust Family Office | Moderator

Aarthi Lakshminarayanan, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas

Ganesh S Iyer, Founder & CEO, Pro-Risk Group

Sreepriya NS: Let me ask a simple question: what is tougher — building the business, or trusting someone and handing it over? Most founders will honestly say handing it over is tougher.

Aarthi, let me begin with you. What is succession planning, and when is the right time to start?

Aarthi Lakshminarayanan: Succession planning and estate planning must begin at the earliest possible stage, ideally at the founder stage itself. That makes the transition easier for the next generation. The process depends on the number of family members, the quantum of wealth, the nature of assets, the businesses involved, and how far those businesses have expanded.

A succession plan may involve a will, a trust, companies, partnerships, holding entities, or a combination of these. The structure must fit the family; the family should not be forced into a structure simply because someone else has adopted it. The key goal is to create a good family charter or constitution document. This allows the family to define its values, systems, goals, expectations, roles, and responsibilities.

Succession planning is not only about who

receives what. It is also about preparing people to lead, helping them understand responsibility, and equipping them to face a changing world.

What happens when families have not planned and transition happens suddenly?

When there is no planning, the consequences can be serious. If there is a sudden death, dispute, or partition, and there is no registered will, trust, or clear document, the law takes over. The founder's intention may be lost. Assets and businesses may be distributed according to succession law rather than family intent.

That is why continuity must be planned and assets must be protected. I often advise families to separate ownership and management. Ownership can be held through a trust or similar structure, while day-to-day operations can be managed through companies or professional teams. This helps the family retain ownership without disrupting business operations.

Ganeshh, many families spend years building enterprises but leave founders or key successors uninsured or underinsured. What role does insurance play?

Ganeshh S. Ayer: Stewardship is the infrastructure, and succession planning is the process. Insurance, annuity, pension, and liquidity from a properly drafted will are invisible pillars. People notice them only when they are needed.

In India, insurance has often been treated as an investment or tax-saving product, and the protection element has been forgotten. Keyman insurance, liability insurance, directors and officers insurance,

trustee insurance, and cover for art, jewellery, patents, logos, and digital assets are all important. A will alone is not enough; liquidity is important.

If three partners run a business and one dies, the surviving partners may not want the deceased partner's spouse to enter the business. Insurance proceeds can help the firm buy back that share, provided a legal agreement has already defined valuation and rights. This thinking applies to family businesses too.

The biggest risk may be that the next generation does not want to join the business. Succession planning must include the possibility that there may be no successor in the traditional sense.

Aarthi, how do families prepare the next generation to become stewards rather than mere beneficiaries?

Aarthi Lakshminarayanan: The earlier the better. Families must create a charter, define roles, and include all members irrespective of gender. The next generation must receive education, exposure, mentorship, and freedom to develop their own ideas. Some may not want to enter the family business, and that must be respected.

External advisers can help. Lawyers, chartered accountants, tax advisers, financial advisers, and family office professionals bring neutral perspectives. Family councils and steering councils are useful because they introduce investment, legal, regulatory, social, and governance perspectives.

Ganesh S. Ayer: Founders also need training.

The next generation will speak about AI and new technologies, and the older generation cannot simply say, “My traditional business does not use this.” Reverse learning must happen.

Business continuity planning must also evolve. A family business must ask: what if my child is not interested, what if my industry changes, what if my competitor comes from outside my industry? A textile business may find that its competitor is not another textile shop, but a mobile phone. Families must be ready to pivot and review options regularly.

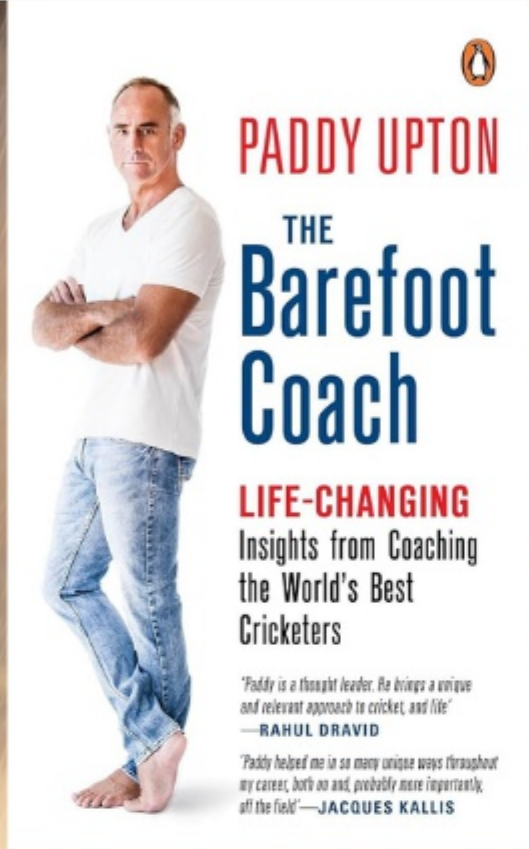
In a volatile world, how do families preserve unity without enforcing uniformity?

Aarthi Lakshminarayanan: From a legal perspective, continuity depends on documentation, defined roles, leadership planning, professional guidance, and conflict-resolution mechanisms. Families can include mediation in the family constitution so that disputes are resolved constructively before they escalate.

Ganesh S. Ayer: Documentation must be reviewed annually, biannually, or whenever a major family event occurs. More importantly, someone must be responsible for the review. Financial education must also begin early. In my home, I gave my children three piggy banks: 10% for giving, 25% for spending, and 65% for saving and investment. That teaches responsibility, choice, restraint, and values. ■

LIFE LESSONS FROM THE OFF SIDE

DISCUSSION ON THE BOOK



Dr CA Sangeeta Shankaran Sumesh
The Gain Enabler



Avinash Jain
Global CFO,
Alldigi Tech Limited



Viswanathan Hariharan
IDirector-HR and Head of Business Services, VIVA-IT

Drawing lessons from the performance of world's best cricketers, the conversation examines Paddy Upton's book on coaching, mindset and leadership principles that help individuals thrive under pressure.

The best advice on giving advice: Don't not give it.

Dr CA Sangeeta Shankaran Sumesh

The Gain Enabler | CFO turned Business and Leadership Coach

I chose this book for three reasons. First, because there is so much we can learn from the world of sports — both personally and professionally. Second, I was genuinely curious about what it truly takes to coach such highly accomplished global cricketers. Third, because I always tell leaders: if elite sports players work with a coach, why should it be any different in the corporate world?

The Barefoot Coach is written by Paddy Upton, a South African who served as the mental and strategic leadership coach for the Indian cricket team. Before I go further, two quick disclaimers: I am not a big cricket enthusiast, and our focus today is not on the game itself or the cricketers. It is on leadership, management, and life. That said, for avid cricket fans,



this book will certainly not disappoint.

The book is a collection of Paddy's experiences as a mental coach for various cricket teams, including the Indian team that won the World Cup in 2011. It also unveils the not-so-glamorous side of being a celebrity cricketer — the sacrifices, coping with injuries, and handling enormous pressure when an entire nation's eyes are on you.

Let me share the three most precious takeaways from the book. The first: commitment means your will to win must be bigger than your fear of losing. How committed are you to your goals? The second: the antidote to post-podium blues is having another goal to work towards. What is next for you? The third: every day you must do something to better yourself as a person.

Three powerful quotes from the book stayed with me. Sachin Tendulkar says, 'Who I am as a person is permanent. My results on the field are temporary. It is more important that I am consistent as a person, because that is what I can control.' Explorer Mike

The book also offers fifteen leadership reminders applicable in both sport and business...

Horn, who addressed the Indian team, says: 'You achieve your dream by making it to the top — but once you get there, plan what is next.' And tennis champion Rafael Nadal: 'Press the reset button after every high or every low. Get back to zero and start again.'

What deeply resonated with me as a leadership coach is how Paddy redefines coaching itself. Traditionally, coaching meant giving instructions — quick, easy, and familiar. But that approach is disempowering, frustrating, and compromises learning. A coach does not tell. A coach asks powerful questions, gets you clarity, enables improvement, fine-tunes your thinking, and works with you on your desired outcome. Paddy shares the example of a financially successful but internally broken company — over 50% of its managers were on anti-stress medication because of a tyrannical leader. His core insight is this: playing to your strengths delivers excellence, but patching your weaknesses will never lead to excellence.

The book also offers fifteen leadership reminders applicable in both sport and business: choose your battles wisely; question the status quo; intelligent players have awareness of their own game; giving your best and losing is better than cutting corners and winning; reprimanding and blaming are tools that serve only the coach's ego; and leadership effectiveness reduces when leaders place their own interests first. One that particularly struck me: the

mind does not hear the word 'don't'. And one that is quietly profound: the best advice on giving advice is to think twice about it — and then not give it. This is a must-read for cricket fans, leaders, and coaches alike.

'I want you to be my friend.'

Avinash Jain

Global CFO, Alldigi Tech Limited

My first impression of this book is that it has nothing to do with cricket — even though it is full of cricket anecdotes. It is a compendium of leadership lessons. The essence of leadership is not creating followers but creating more leaders. And that has been beautifully crafted here. Leaders are not born or made; they are nurtured — shaped like a chisel working on stone.

One thing I especially liked is how Paddy and Gary Kirsten approached the Indian team when they arrived in 2008. The previous coach had been dictatorial and instruction-based. Paddy and Gary did the opposite. They ensured the players took ownership, worked in close consultation and negotiation, and that is one big reason our Indian team went on to win the World Cup. What they practised was servant leadership — not autocratic leadership. Those days are gone. Leadership today has to be participative.

When Gary and Paddy asked Sachin Tendulkar what he expected from them as coaches, his answer was disarmingly simple: 'I want you to be my friend.' That is the essence of leadership. Leadership does not carry a title or a position. It lives in the minds and

hearts of colleagues. You must earn respect — not demand it.

I also liked the chapter on 'noses and s' — asking why. Why am I doing this? What value am I adding? Whether you are a student considering an MBA or a CFO at a company, that fundamental question matters. During my ITC agri business days, we had over a hundred standard operating procedures. I kept asking: why do we need a hundred? Could a simple card listing fifteen key steps serve the person on the ground better? Once we start asking why, better answers follow. We see it today with AI too — every project must be evaluated: will this give us operational efficiency, accuracy, enhanced margins? Start with why.

On the subject of fear of failure: Paddy splits things into what is controllable and what is not. Focus on what you can control; let go of what you cannot. That framework helped me through the CA exams, where pass rates were around 3-4%. In my ITC days, when the government suddenly opened wheat exports, our entire team faced something entirely new. We laid down the systems, visited the port, and in ten months scaled from zero to six-and-a-half lakh tons — making ITC the largest private wheat exporter of 2012-13. Overconfidence, though, is equally dangerous. In the same period we took large commodity positions in soybeans and ended up absorbing a loss we could have avoided. Both lessons — from fear and from overconfidence — taught me the same thing: stay sincere to your goal, focus on your strengths, and be perseverant.

The key is to give up the need to always be right...

Viswanathan Hariharan

Director-HR and Head of Business Services, VIVA-IT

Talent is inborn. Each one of us in this room has unique talents. But talent alone is not enough — it must be identified, nurtured, and aligned to organisational expectations. In HR, this is where talent acquisition and talent development meet. You hire people for their innate abilities, but then you must shape them through training, mentoring, and role alignment. Sachin Tendulkar is the best example. He was gifted beyond measure, but in his teenage years he would visit every ground, play at least three matches a day, and work relentlessly to maintain his standard. He did not rely on talent alone. He combined talent with discipline and coaching. That is what the mushrooming of corporate coaches today is about — they do not do things for you; they enable you to do things.

On the battle of egos: all of us carry egos — that is simply a fact. The corporate dressing room is no different from the cricket dressing room. I will share a real example. We needed to hire a recruiter for our team. My CEO in the US asked me to conduct the first-level interview. I shortlisted a candidate and gave my feedback. The manager reporting to me felt bypassed — he had not been consulted first. Instead of speaking to me directly, he gave a conflicting feedback to the CEO. That is the ego at work: not upset about the candidate, but upset about who was asked to evaluate. Ego is not confined to corporate life — it exists in families, among friends, everywhere. You cannot

eradicate it. You can only manage it. The key is to give up the need to always be right, ask yourself what you truly stand to lose by listening to the other person, and find a common agenda. Many years ago I attended a five-day leadership programme that transformed how I handle this. When my father passed away and his elder brother did not come to the funeral, I held onto that grievance for months. After that programme, I called him, said I was sorry, and let it go. That is where it begins — the willingness to give up what is holding you.

The fear of failure is universal, but it is especially magnified in the corporate environment. The moment fear sets in, it starts consuming your executive time, your managerial energy, your leadership bandwidth. A good leader cannot be paralysed by the fear of failure. A leader has to bring the team forward with a mindset of positive psychology — anticipating where failure might occur and addressing it before it arrives. Right now, I have been unable to hire a Python developer for the past four to five months. My CEO calls from the US every week to ask why. That fear is real. But the answer is not to be driven by anxiety — it is to stay methodical, keep looking, and not let the pressure distort the process. The book's chapter on riding the wave of fear resonated deeply with me on this. Psychological safety in the workplace matters enormously. When people are afraid to raise problems, the problems do not disappear — they compound. Leaders who create safety create teams that speak up, course-correct early, and ultimately succeed. ■

THE PERCEPTION GAP: WHERE REPUTATIONS ARE MADE



DISCUSSION ON THE BOOK



Mr C Siva Kumar

Director, Roots Industries India Ltd
& Partner, Timelinks



Prime Point Srinivasan

Chairman, PrimePoint Foundation
and DJAI



Mr K Asokan

Editor - Kumudam Weekly, Kumudam
Snehidhi & Kumudam Bakthi

Panellists discuss the book, "The Mirror Within: Unveiling Hidden Perception through Image Audit," and focus on how every organisation has two identities — the one it believes it projects and the one stakeholders actually experience. Understanding the difference is the essence of image audit.

Many corporates fear this exercise

Prime Point Srinivasan

Founder & Chairman, Prime Point Foundation and Digital Journalists Association of India

This book was born from a moment of rediscovery. About a month ago, MMA organised an online programme on why exit polls and opinion polls fail to reflect voters' views. I was a panelist along with Mr T S Krishna Murthy, former Chief Election Commissioner, and another poll analyst. During that discussion, I made references to the concept of image audit and how perception shifts. After the session, Group Captain Vijay Kumar asked me why I had not put these ideas in writing. I told him I had written everything fifteen years ago, but it was sitting somewhere on a hard drive. He insisted I retrieve it and make it useful — for the corporate world and for management students.

I went back to my archives. Seven or eight



newspaper reports, detailed coverage in The Hindu, material from my blogs — I pulled everything together. My colleague Romesh Sundaram, a senior journalist, helped me locate original reports in PDF form. Within twenty days, working intensively, the entire book was complete. It is now freely available to everyone — scan the QR code, download it, read it, and share it.

The core idea of this book is straightforward: perception gets formed whether we intend it or not. To demonstrate this, I asked everyone in today's audience to scan a QR code and answer just two questions — their first impression about two names. The results came back instantly: one name drew 100% positive responses; the other drew 100% negative. All of you come from different professions and different environments. You did not consult each other. Yet your first perceptions were identical. That is the power — and the danger — of perception.

How does perception form? In the book I have explained five primary sources. First, direct personal experience — the hotels we prefer on our travels, the

brands we seek out, are all products of experience. Second, the performance of an organisation over time. Third, what others say — many of you have never met Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, yet every one of you holds a positive perception of him, shaped by what you have read and heard. Fourth, rumours, which are especially dangerous in the age of social media. Fifth, manufactured illusions — narratives deliberately constructed to create a particular image of a leader or institution.

The deeper challenge is the hidden perception. In an organisation of four or five thousand people, every individual carries an inner opinion that rarely surfaces to management. People say 'excellent' when they mean something entirely different. These hidden perceptions form patterns — trends — that eventually shape outcomes, whether in corporate results or election verdicts.

The idea for image audit first came to me in the 1980s when I was a branch manager at Corporation Bank in Bangalore. I noticed something on long train journeys: complete strangers would share family secrets they had never disclosed to their own spouses or children. Why? Because the listener was anonymous, there was no consequence, and there was a genuine human urge to ventilate — to express what is held within. I harnessed that insight. An image audit creates precisely those three conditions: anonymity, group setting, and an independent third party with no stake in the outcome. The result is honest, unfiltered perception — a master health checkup for your organisation.

Many corporates fear this exercise for the same

reason some people avoid a health checkup: they do not want to know the results. But just as ignoring high blood pressure does not make it disappear, ignoring an organisation's hidden perception only amplifies the risk. The image audit is a proactive leadership tool. It tells you where the virus is, so you can deploy the antivirus before the damage becomes irreversible.

Image audit scores should become standard governance practice

C Siva Kumar

Member, MMA Managing Committee; Director, Roots Industries India Ltd & Partner, Timelinks

It is a genuine privilege to release this book, and I want to connect it immediately to lived experience — because that is what makes Prime Point Srinivasan's work so resonant.

I ran an industry through twelve years of loss. During that difficult period I had time to study something that troubled me deeply: why was there such a profound divide inside my own company? In Hosur, where my factory was located, colourful flags outside every gate signal the number of unions inside. We had many. One day, a worker came to me and said something I will never forget: 'Sir, I am a helper. My son will be a helper. My grandson will be a helper. You are in management. Your son will be a Managing Director. Your grandson will be a Managing Director. So everything you do is for yourself — not for us. The only way we can get what we want is to rebel.' I came back from that conversation with a homework assignment to myself: how do I change not just a

perception but a reality?

The answer I found was not extra salary or perks. It was education — but not an education allowance, because cash can be redirected. Instead, I connected each worker's child to a mentor in Chennai who matched the child's ambition: a child who wanted to be a lawyer was connected to a lawyer; one who wanted to be a cricketer, to a cricketer; one who wanted to be an engineer, to an engineer. The only instruction to mentors was: do not give gifts — just guide. When that mentorship programme took root, my factory workforce grew from ten to twelve hundred. In that twelve hundred, there was not a single day of lockout, strike, charge sheet, or suspension. That transformation was only possible because I first understood the hidden perception of my people.

When I browsed through the chapters of this book, I found exactly the methodology I had stumbled upon through trial and error — laid out with scientific rigour. Prime Point Srinivasan has provided a clear pathway to surface what employees actually think, using open-ended questions in an anonymous, external setting. The examples in this book are remarkable. In one reputed college, the chairman was about to dismiss a professor he considered underperforming. The image audit revealed that this professor was rated by students as the institution's single greatest asset. The chairman said he would have been a great sinner had he dismissed him. Instead, he promoted the professor.

In another case, a college introduced free remedial tuition for average students, using its best

staff. A well-intentioned gesture — yet the student survey showed strong dissatisfaction. Probing deeper revealed two things: students felt punished by having to stay longer, and logistics made going home difficult. Simply providing transport resolved both issues, and those same students began recommending the college to others.

The book also argues for something that should become standard governance practice: image audit scores should appear alongside financial audits, quality audits, and cost audits on a company's balance sheet. People are an organisation's greatest strength, yet the alignment of people to organisational purpose remains unmeasured and invisible in most boardrooms. If image audit scores were disclosed with the same transparency we are beginning to demand for climate metrics, I am convinced share prices would reflect it positively.

A manual for stakeholder leadership

K Asokan

Editor — Kumudam Weekly, Kumudam Snehidhi & Kumudam Bakthi

There is a line I would like to offer as the essence of this book: a person who cannot see the truth through the eyes of others is blind, even if they have eyes. That is what image audit gives you — the eyes of your stakeholders. And in an era when leaders at every level are surrounded by people who tell them only what they want to hear, those eyes are invaluable.

I have known Prime Point Srinivasan for nearly

four decades. In fact, it is I who gave him the name 'Prime Point Srinivasan' — and he has carried the glory of that name ever since! More seriously, I have watched this work develop over a very long time. What he has written here is not theory. It is field knowledge, refined over decades of conducting image audits for banks, colleges, manufacturing companies, and public institutions. The methodology is meticulous, the ethics even more so: every report is confidential, shared only with the commissioning organisation, and the raw data is destroyed once the engagement is complete.

From a journalist's perspective, I see this book as a manual for stakeholder leadership. In journalism, we are taught that the reader's perception of your publication is your reality, regardless of what you believe about yourself. The same principle governs every institution. You may believe your organisation is performing excellently. Your employees, customers, and communities may hold an entirely different view. The gap between those two realities is where reputations are made or destroyed — and it is precisely that gap which image audit measures.

What strikes me most is the courage this book asks of leaders: the courage to commission an honest diagnosis, and the further courage to act on what they find. In my experience, the second is far harder than the first.

Q&A

What are the key indicators that an organisation urgently needs an image audit?

Ask yourself the same question you would ask about a master health checkup — when should I go? The honest answer is: always, but especially when there is a gap. Every organisation exists on three levels: what it truly stands for, what its leadership believes it stands for, and what its stakeholders actually perceive. When those three diverge significantly, an image audit is not optional — it is urgent. Unfortunately, many organisations in India believe they are the best, and that very confidence prevents them from testing themselves. I have personally seen the cost of that attitude. In one multinational company with over five thousand employees across three shifts, I conducted an image audit and submitted a report identifying that ten to fifteen senior people on a particular floor were very likely to leave. The CEO paid my invoice promptly but did not read the report. Forty-five days later, those people had resigned. When the Chairman from America arrived and discovered what had happened, he was furious. Paying the consultant's bill and acting on the consultant's findings are two very different things.

How does image audit differ from an employee

survey or feedback system?

An employee survey is conducted by the management. The moment an employee knows the management is reading their response, the instinct to please the boss overrides honesty. We all do it — it is human nature. Image audit is conducted externally, by an independent third party, in a group setting, anonymously. Those three conditions together produce something an internal survey simply cannot: the hidden perception. I have seen people who write confidently in anonymous sheets put the pen down the moment they suspect someone is watching. The questionnaire design matters enormously too — most questions use a scale, but I always include zero as an option. When a CEO once asked me to start from one instead of zero so that ratings would be slightly higher, I refused. The zeros are the most valuable data points in the entire audit. Every respondent who gives a zero is telling you something no paid consultant would dare say to your face.

How do you identify and leverage silent workers who are consistently overlooked?

This is actually where my entire journey with image audit began. When I was branch manager at Corporation Bank in Bangalore, I distributed questionnaires to walk-in customers one day — 150 responses. I included a question: name one staff member who has helped you most. There was a colleague next to my cabin who never spoke more than one or two words. I had been planning to request his transfer. When the results came back, more than

seventy percent of customers had named him as the most cooperative staff member. I was stunned. Silent workers are consistently mistaken for disengaged workers. Communication does not mean talking. Communication means getting things done — and done well, quietly, consistently. The image audit surfaces what management cannot see because management is not watching the right things. Silent contributors are often the organisation's greatest hidden assets, and the audit reveals them.

How is corporate image audit different from political perception management?

The purpose is the same — understanding hidden perception — but the conditions are entirely different. In the corporate setting, we conduct the audit in a calm environment, with no competing noise, no incentives distorting responses, and no hype. In politics, you conduct it in the middle of a storm: blaring music, massive media campaigns, manufactured narratives, and what I call 'fence sitters' — approximately fifteen percent of voters who decide at the last moment and who are the greatest challenge for any political strategy. An election is, in a sense, an image audit conducted in a noisy atmosphere. The corporate image audit is the same exercise done with scientific rigour in a quiet room. Both reveal the truth. The difference is only in how clearly you can hear it. ■

GALLERY



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