

# Education Post

A NEW HIGH IN EDUCATION

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**THE  
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OF WOMEN  
EMPOWERMENT  
IN INDIA**



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the skin of  
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# JANUARY 2020

## Private University Ranking 2020

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## SEPTEMBER SYMPHONIES

September has, so far, been a month full of actions and actionable dreams. We in India have had everything from the way Modi hugged the ISRO Chief to calm him to the way he hugged Trump to balm him and the world called them **economic nationalists**. The '*Seva Saptah*' or week of service from September 14 to 20 to mark the prime minister's birthday on September 17 and then the now slogan doing the rounds ('*Sabse bada dhan - beti, jal aur van*' which means 'Girl child, water and forest are the biggest assets') have hogged news headlines as much as the nervous heebie-jeebies of Imran Khan have. This has so far been a rather emotion-filled month. A month where the slogan 'shared dreams, bright futures' has dominated all discussions on every possible news and views platform. '**Howdy Modi**' in Houston, USA reflects this but I've anyway believed in this mantra for ages now.

The truth is that we need to share well as this is what connects us with others though it isn't as if not sharing means farewell to dreams. Sharing, in down-to-earth expressions, is what being **people friendly, development friendly, and investment friendly** signify. Yes, sharing is an investment as well because the returns are embedded in our future.

Talking of sharing, we are in the midst of serious rounds of discussions at the UN where sharing the burden of climate change is causing more than just breezy flutters. Greta Thunberg, 'a very happy young girl' as Trump called her, and her fiery '**How dare you?**' speech with a determined glare in her eyes has brought all issues surrounding our climate to the fore. World leaders need to finally stop bouncing words and promises towards each other and get something done. This girl, as I write this column, has won the **alternate Nobel** for environmental work and it is definitely not for just saying 'Right here, right now is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not'. Even Greta isn't free from people doubting her actions and an article titled 'Green capitalism is using Greta Thunberg' by frackfree\_eu published online a few months back and one that can be read here: <https://link.medium.com/hvzXVS78f0> clearly says that 'everything was carefully planned to transform the young Swede into an international heroine' and that the leaders of this movement 'intend to save the planet while continuing to pursue economic growth and demanding more globalisation. An entire agenda.' They call this '**greenwashing**'.

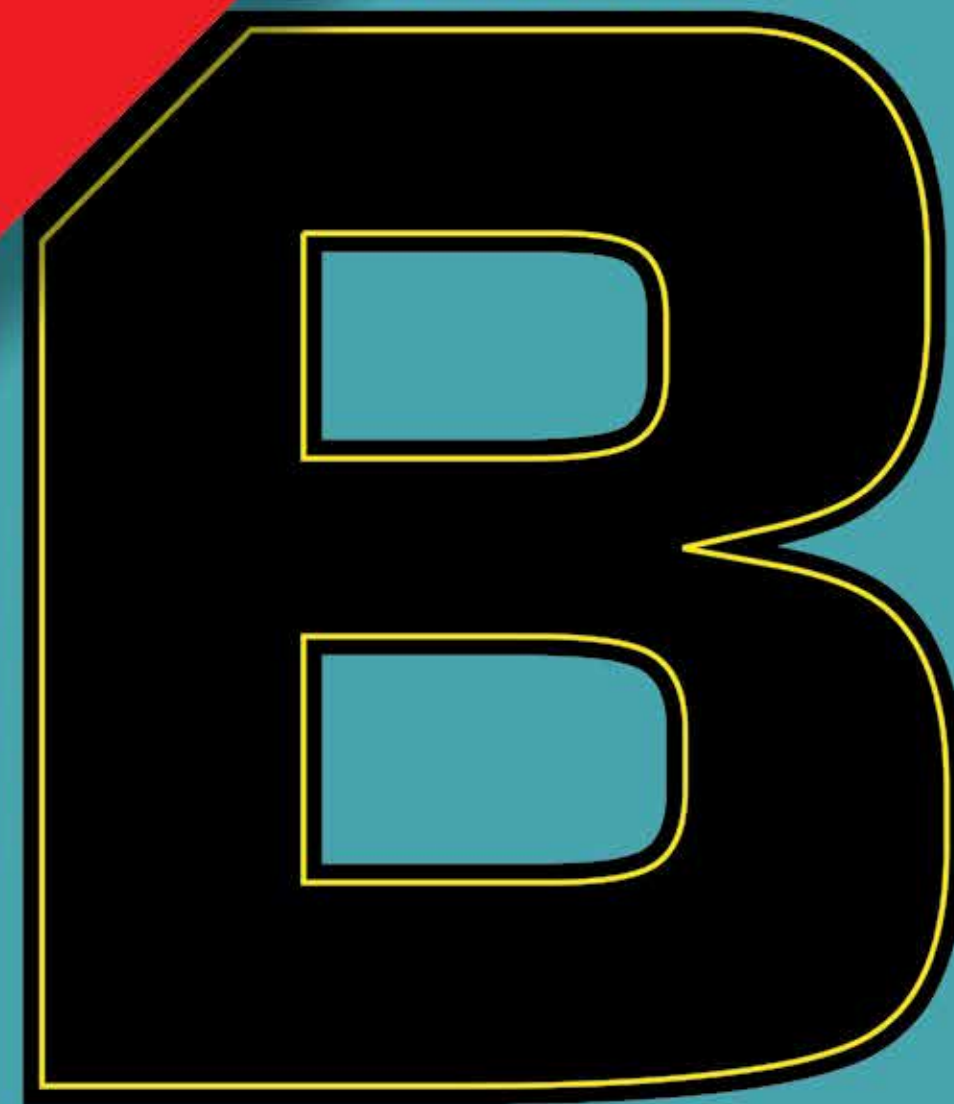
With so much happening all over, it wasn't easy to decide on the cover story for the month... and then when I heard the PM say '*We are challenging ourselves, we are changing ourselves*' the decision was made. Tourism, I reckoned, isn't just about revenues coming in but also about bringing the country closer to Indians and making us able and deserving tourists before looking towards increased footfalls from abroad.

September symphonies, I believe, are both finite and infinite because news has its own way of filling in whatever space is available. One can simply wish for news to remain pleasant and upbeat.

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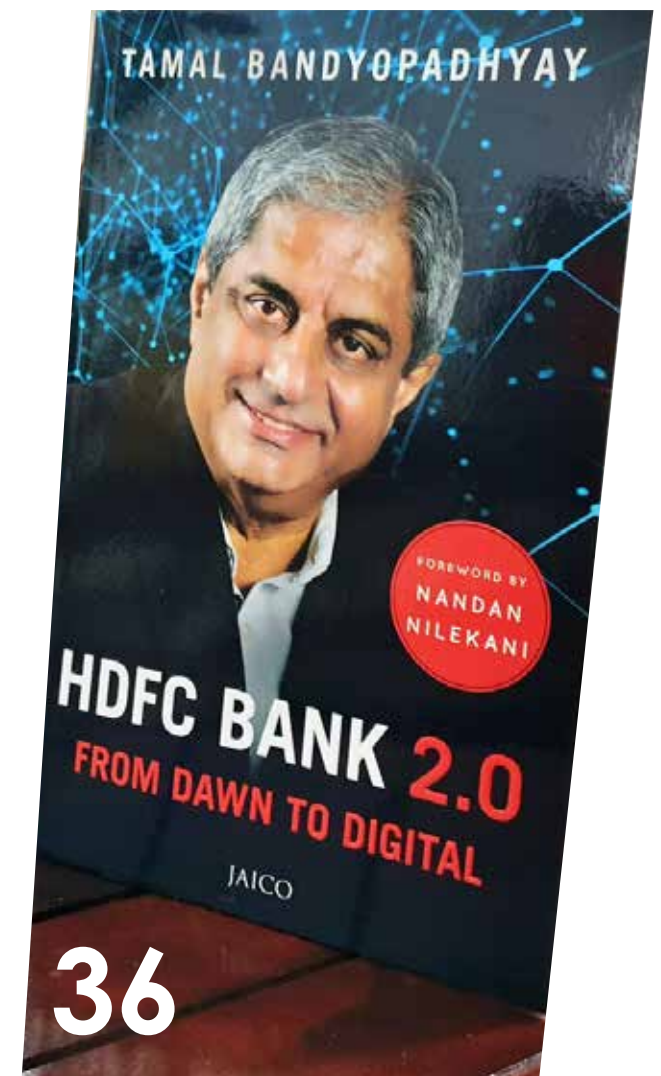
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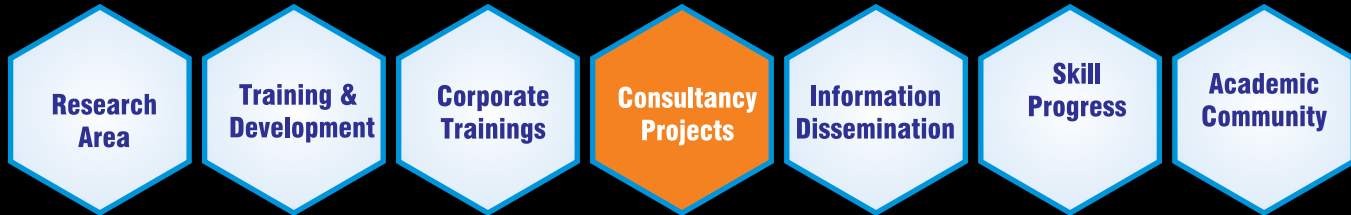
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**Dr H Chaturvedi**  
Director, BIMTECH

## HIGHER EDUCATION & UNIVERSITY RANKINGS AT GLOBAL LEVEL

# H

igher Education is a global service industry giving huge revenues to national economies and employing millions of people as faculty and staff every year. Around 10 million students leave their own country for pursuing higher education in some developed nations. Among the developed nation, there is an intense competition to get these students enrolled in their universities. Admission seekers in universities generally look for rankings to judge the quality of higher education offered by them.

Global university rankings such as Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) or Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) Ranking, Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) World University Ranking and QS World University Ranking are considered most popular in the world.

- The THES Ranking:** This ranking is considered a balanced ranking because it assigns equal weights to teaching and research - 30 per cent each level. Citations for research papers carry another 30 per cent while international outlook of a university and industry income have 7.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent weight respectively.
- SJTU or ARWU Ranking:** The SJTU or ARWU ranking is the most popular in the case of universities which are research focused. In this ranking, four broad categories - Quality of Education, Quality of Faculty; Research Out-put, and Per Capita Performance - several indicators are chosen and definite weights are assigned to each of them under the ranking.

- QS World University Ranking:** It publishes ranking for the top 400 universities in the world. This ranking is mainly reputation-based as academic reputation from global survey has 40 per cent weight and employer reputation 10 per cent. Half of the total weights are thus based on the reputation of the universities and the rest are distributed among citations (20 per cent), faculty-student ratio (20 per cent), and proportion of international students and staff (10 per cent).

**The Table 1.2** presents comparison of the parameters and weightages used by three world level rankings. These rankings provide information about educational quality across the world about HEIs. The parameters, weights and process of ranking are made public through their respective websites. Global Rankings indeed give us some idea about the performance of the universities across the world. But one should not expect that global rankings are without any inbuilt lacuna or defect. Actually the whole concept has favourable tilt towards universities of North America and Europe.

**TABLE 1.2 Basic Parameters and their Weights used in Global University Rankings (in per cent)**

Shanghai Jiao Tong	The THES Ranking	QS Ranking
Alumni of an Institution Winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals: 10	Teaching: 30	Academic Reputation from Global Survey: 40
Staff of an Institution Winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals: 20	Research: 30	Employers' Reputation from Global Survey: 10
Highly-Cited Researchers in 21 Broad Subject Categories: 20		Citations per Faculty: 20
Papers published in Nature and Science: 20	Citation: 30	Faculty-Student Ratio: 20
Papers Indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Science Citation Index: 20	Industry Income: 2.5	Proportion of International Students: 5
Per Capita Academic Performance of an Institution: 10	International Outlook: 7.5	Proportion of International Faculty: 5



### Issues & Challenges in Global Rankings

- Focus on Foreign Students & Faculty:-** While ranking universities and higher education institutions at global level, global rankings agencies expect that the proportion of foreign students and faculty to total number of students and faculty of a university should be of higher order. But they underscore the fact that many university could have a vision and mission to serve the educational needs of local or regional economy. Giving weightage to the presence of foreign students and faculty in higher numbers might not serve the needs of these kind of universities and HEIs.
- Disfavouring Non-English Speaking Population:-** English may be the dominant language in higher education at the international level, but there are large number of countries in the world who allow their teachers, students and research scholars to use languages other than English in teaching and research. Popular global rankings have an inherent bias in favour of research work published in English. Research scholars doing their work in languages like Chinese, French, Spanish, German, Hindi etc. normally face difficulties in finding reputed journals for getting their research papers published. Thus global rankings are unable to correct this imbalance





which is tilted in favour of English speaking nations, especially from Western Countries. (Marginson, 2006)

- ◆ **Delinking Universities from their Context:-** Higher education institutions and universities are creation of their place of origin and their historical requirements. Hence while ranking them, global rankings should preferably not use common parameters or weightages ignoring the fact that assessment of the quality of a university cannot be delinked from its local context and needs.
- ◆ **Lack of Holistic Assessment:-** A university or a higher education institution serves the society mostly by creating and disseminating new knowledge and also by grooming talent for the future requirements of the society. In this perspective, both teaching and research are equally important in higher education. Global rankings are sometimes criticized for not using a holistic framework for judging the quality of a university. For example, the SJTU Ranking lays inordinate emphasis on research which ultimately disfavours a national university focusing on teaching. It may not find a top slot in spite of producing thousands of talented manpower suit the needs of to the host country.
- ◆ **Neglecting Social Responsibility of A University:-** Universities and higher education institutions are integral part of the economy and thus act as a source of supplying talented manpower for the future needs of a nation. Global ranking, by giving higher weightages to research and less weightage to teaching simply ignores the basic fact that a university has to serve society primarily by ensuring a steady supply of talented manpower.

- ◆ **Perpetual Dominance of Ivey League Institutions:-** In global rankings, there is a tilt also in favour of those Ivey League Institutions which have been building global reputations in the course of their evolution. Giving weightage to reputation and perception leads to a perpetual dominance of Ivey League Institutions. (Altbach, 2006)
- ◆ **Favouring the Well Established University:-** Worldwide, Universities are not of similar size, stature and strength. But the ranking models of different global rankings mostly favour well established universities who have a long history with sizable endowments and big annual budget. These universities, naturally, also have large number of students, faculty and staff.
- ◆ **Misuse of Rankings by Admission Marketus:-** Marketing of products and service usually bring the possibility of unethical methods being used by markets. Innocent students and parents are many times led by admission marketers to take admission in inferior institutions by mis-interpretation of rankings. Multiplicity of rankings aggravates this problem.
- ◆ **Tendency to Inflate the Data:-** Good ranking of a university opens opportunities for getting more funds, tie ups, alliances and partnerships. To climb up on the ranking ladder, universities sometime resort to inflating the data. Although it is always risky to make false claims, it is a shortcut adopted by some administrators in universities where the ethical code is not adhered to by the leadership.
- ◆ **McDonaldization of Higher Education:-** Similar to models



of big consumer brands like McDonalds, KFC, Coca-Cola, Pepsi etc. global ranking agencies have a tendency to apply same set of ranking parameters or criteria to universities operating in different parts of the world. There is a growing concern that the desire among university to find place in the 'Top 200 University List' could actually 'McDonaldize' higher education which will not help in the sustainability or future development of those universities.

### NIRF-India's Initiative in Ranking

During the last decade whenever global rankings of universities and higher educations were announced, there have been uproars in Indian media, in the parliament, as well as in the academia. In all these global rankings, names of few Indian universities and IITs alone find some place in 'Top-200' or 'Top-500' category, whereas several universities from countries like China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore were continuously getting top positions regularly. It created a lot of heart-burning among the policy makers and political leaders. India's former President Pranab Mukherjee, who was

also the ipso facto Chancellor for 40+ central universities was very much concerned about this and had spoken about it several times. To prepare the Indian universities for meeting requirements of global ranking, a new idea emerged as to why India cannot start its own 'National Ranking Framework'? Since 2014, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has been contemplating to launch India's own National Ranking so as to create competition among Indian universities and institutions and in the process raise the overall standards of educational institutions.

In this backdrop, the **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)** was approved by the MHRD and launched by the Minister of Human Resource Development on **September 29, 2015**.

### Evolution of the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF)

A one-day workshop was organized by the MHRD on 21 August 2014 for developing methodologies for the ranking of institutions of higher education in India. The workshop resolved to constitute a Committee for evolving





a National Ranking Framework. A Core Committee consisting of 16 members was constituted on 29 October 2014 with Secretary (Higher Education, MHRD, as Chairperson and Additional Secretary (Technical Education), MHRD, as Member-Secretary.

**The terms of reference of the Committee were**

- ◆ Suggest a National Framework for performance measurement and ranking of Institutions and Programmes.
- ◆ Suggest the organizational structure, institutional mechanism and processes for implementation along with time-lines of the National Ranking Framework.
- ◆ A mechanism for financing of the Scheme on National Ranking Framework.
- ◆ Linkages with National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA), if any.

An Expert Committee was constituted by the UGC on October 9, 2015 to develop a framework for the ranking of universities and colleges in India and the framework developed by this Expert Committee was incorporated into National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF). The Core Committee also suggested a framework

for ranking institutions offering management education also. For ranking management, pharmacy and architecture institution, the AICTE was designated to develop parameters and metrics.

**Recommendations of the Core Committee**

The following recommendations were made by the Core Committee:

1. The metrics for ranking of engineering institutions should be based on the parameters agreed upon by the Core Committee.
2. The parameters were organized into five broad heads or groups and each group has been divided into suitable sub-groups.
3. A suitable metric was proposed which computed a score under each sub-head. The sub-head scores were then added to obtain scores for each individual head. The overall score was computed-based on the weights allotted to each head. The overall score could take a maximum value of 100.
4. The Committee recommended the classification of institutions into two categories:

- ◆ Category A Institutions: These are institutions of

national importance set up by Acts of Parliament, State Universities, Deemed-to-be Universities, Private Universities and other autonomous institutions.

- ◆ Category B Institutions: These are institutions affiliated to a University and do not enjoy full academic autonomy.

**Parameters and their weightages**

**Engineering, Management, Pharmacy and Architecture institutions**

The approved set of parameter groups and the weightages assigned to the categories of institutions offering programmes in engineering, management, pharmacy and architecture are given in the following table.

Parameters	Category A institutions	Category B institutions
Teaching, learning and resources (TLR)	0.30	0.30
Research, professional practice and collaborative performance (RPC)	0.30	0.20
Graduation outcome (GO)	0.15	0.25
Outreach and inclusivity (OI)	0.15	0.15
Perception (PR)	0.10	0.10

**Overall and colleges**

The approved set of parameter groups and the weightages assigned to them in respect of overall rating and for colleges are given in the following table, for 2018.

Parameters	Overall	Colleges
Teaching, learning and resources (TLR)	0.30	0.40
Research, productivity, impact and IPR (RPII)	0.30	0.15
Graduation outcome (GO)	0.20	0.25
Outreach and inclusivity (OI)	0.10	0.10
Perception (PR)	0.10	0.10

**Criticism of NIRF**

- ◆ **High levels of variation:** Ranking launched by NIRF shows the suspiciously huge variations between the 2016 and 2017 rankings. For Example, JamiaMillia university improved to the extent of 71 places, from #83 to #12 whereas Guru Gobind Singh University Delhi fallen in quality by 61 places (#22 to #82)?
- ◆ **Lack of consistency:-** Apart from this, the standout pattern indicates that a large fraction of universities in the 2017 ranking is new entrants, as a corollary, the same number of universities from the 2016 rankings have dropped off the list. To be precise, 47 of the top 100 are new entrants in the NIRF 2017.
- ◆ **Wrong comparison:** As per the NIRF 2017 ranking, the fourth best university in India was a highly specialized research institution in Bengaluru. The JNCASR has around 200-300 Ph.D. students and faculty there at any given time. How does one compare it to the University of Hyderabad (UoH), which came fourth in 2016? UoH has about 4,500 students and 400 faculties. JNCASR is not normally perceived as a university as the term is typically understood.
- ◆ **Structural issue:** Many universities in India have an area of focus: engineering (like BITS-Pilani) or social sciences (like the Tata Institute of Social Sciences). Others offer courses across the arts and sciences, like JNU, UoH, Delhi University, etc. It is the latter that fits the general definition of a university. This means that comparing these two kinds of institutions it not very useful both from the institutions' and from the students' points of view.
- ◆ **Too much focus on research:** One rank to rule them all the fundamental issue with coming up with weighted rankings as what NIRF has adopted it question of weights. Weights are an indication of priority-but whose priority? Currently, the NIRF has decided that research performance counts towards 30% of a university's rank and 20% of a college's rank. Does the average undergraduate student really value research to that extent? ■





# YES, SIGN LANGUAGE DOES SAVE LIVES

Jaideep Khanduja

**H**ow many of you like to fly? How many of us get lost at the airport? We often get lost at the airport trying to figure out the airline check-in to security to boarding gates circuit. This lost maze is what Dr Alim struggled for 20 years of his life trying to find his route, his path, his identity and where to fit in. This is the story of Dr Alim Chandani and millions of deaf Indians. Dr Chandani is deaf by birth and a social role-model for deaf youth in India.

It is estimated that there are around 10 million deaf people in India. Ninety percent of the deaf children are born to hearing parents. Birth of a deaf child is given as traumatizing news by the doctors to the parents. Medical practitioners do not inform the parents of deaf children about the amount of success that deaf individuals have had and that their child could have the same. Access to sign language isn't given as an option to the parents at all. Lack of sign language access has led to immense language deprivation in deaf children.

To talk about the education for the deaf, with about 300 deaf schools in India, can you imagine that 95% of the schools don't allow sign language

as a primary language to teach? Can you imagine more than 2 million deaf children are lost without any guidance or role models. Why so? because, the teachers in deaf schools don't use sign language to teach the students. The emphasis has been limited to oral methods, speech therapies, implants and aids. Amidst all this, the children face immense loss.

While the country has 22 official languages and hundreds of dialects, why can't we consider making the Indian sign language the 23rd official language of the country? A PIL has also been filed not so long back by deaf and disability rights activists to make ISL the 23rd official language of the country. Dr Chandani is one of the petitioners. India will be celebrating 73 years of independence this year, and our

figuring out his true identity till the age of 21 when he was truly exposed to the world of sign language. Today he is one of the very few deaf Indians to have attained a PhD. He moved back to his country of birth in 2016 and started a deaf empowerment skill training center with a leading corporate company. Two years of experience in skilling with more than 525 deaf youth made him and his team of deaf experts understand that skilling alone can't change the situation of the deaf in India. Domain skilling in hospitality, retail, data entry, etc. may get deaf adults blue collared jobs, but there have been significant reports that show us the high attrition rates and very low satisfaction rates. The causes of the fallout vary from discrimination by the dominant hearing community and lack of communication services. There needs to be a paradigm shift from charity to rights, and mere skilling to quality education.

One cannot build a house on a weak foundation. Similarly when it comes to the deaf community, the education system is so poor that one cannot expect that a deaf adult will have his/her dream job and a secured life. The schooling system in India leaves a lot to be desired and despite having a degree in hand, the deaf youth knows very little compared to the general public and the sole reason for the same is an alarming lack of access through sign language in



deaf children are still demanding their freedom of language. **Sign language is a fundamental human right of every deaf person.** Dr Alim Chandani is the living proof of the same. Dr Chandani left the country when he was three, studied in different countries, struggled

the education system. The deaf individuals miss out on the crucial formative years of education. Hence the academic foundation of such a child remains weak, leading to education without knowledge. Education and early intervention through sign language can play a major role in saving the next generations, so that they don't face the same problems today that the deaf youth is facing and thus have a bright future.



*The Deaf community and interpreting community in India created*

Dr. Chandani informs us that another major challenge for the community has been a lack of quality sign language interpreters. For a deaf population of 10 million, there are only 400 sign language interpreters in India. Out of these 400, maybe 40 can qualify to be skilled in receptive and expressive skills. This represents a huge community and demand for quality and ethical ISL Interpreters at schools, colleges, govt. offices, police stations, courts, and every other information traction, recreational and employment institutions. Nonetheless, the country is making considerable efforts and has also passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, which mandates accessible services for all persons with disabilities without any discrimination.

But the troubling question is why we in India at this point do not have a monitoring mechanism and ethical standards for interpreters? While the need for interpreters is endless, there is a lot that waits for attention in the field of Sign language interpretation. Areas needing immediate focus include those ranging from issues of confidentiality, unstructured payment norms, attitude problems, respecting deaf individuals, adapting to regional variations of

sign language, conceptual understanding etc. Dr. Alim with his insightful personal experience with sign language interpreters felt the urgency in developing a ethical practices and code of conduct document for Indian sign language interpreters.

Dr. Alim, using his first hand experience being a deaf person, has examined and interpreted perceptually what communicating with the deaf community means. He believes that doing in-depth surveys and analysis of various barriers faced by deaf people look a leap of faith in Feb 2019 and started his own community based start-up called Access Mantra, AccioMango Pvt. Ltd. The main aim of Access Mantra is to find accessibility solutions. Many people in the country have asked Dr. Chandani a lot of

‘where’ questions, like parents wanting to know where can they learn ISL to communicate with their children, where and how to find schools and colleges for their deaf children and a lot more.

Access Mantra has created a ‘Deaf Information Network’ where one can find a lot of pointed data related to deaf people. It’s a ‘One Stop’ website that shows a visual map of where various private & public organizations, educational institutions, ISL classes, legal/medical services, ISL interpreters, early intervention programs, job training centers & agencies that provide services for the deaf population are located in India. It also aims to provide communication support through an online video platform, providing ISL translation for deaf and Non deaf people to communicate with each other.

The website and services shall be breakthrough for

many barriers the deaf and the Non-deaf community has been facing. The dream is big and so are the challenges. The biggest of all being the ‘attitude’ of the people in powerful positions.

How can we ensure that the new airplane can have a smooth take-off on the runway? What and where is that missing piece in the jigsaw?

Currently, different communities be it the hearing community, the deaf community, the general community or say PwD community are not aligned with each other by default. This could be due to a serious lack of awareness, ignorance or lack of acceptance. Hence, it is very important to involve a person who you are making decisions for.

Let the beauty of Indian sign language radiate and shine! ■



Jaideep is a veteran CIO worked in various enterprises. He is passionate about food, technology, writing, blogging, and traveling. He is wearing multiple hats as of now - Enterprise Technology writer with TechTarget Inc., Mentor with Everwise, Founder of a business consulting firm, Emotional Intelligence Trainer. and a few more.



Rimli Bhattacharya

# THE DISCOURSE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

"If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman".  
Margaret Thatcher

# T

The discourse of women empowerment in India is absolutely reliant on numerous disparate variables including scholastic stature, casteism, topographical whereabouts (rural/urban) and age. There are policies laid down on paper pertaining to women empowerment at both national and local (panchayat) levels in sectors pertaining to health, fiscal policies, edification, political association and gender – based violence. But the eternal question lies – are we following them? The answer is; there are consequential hiatus between the policies laid and the actual practice followed by a faction of people.

We reside in a patriarchal misogynistic society which is one of the key reasons for this hiatus in actual execution of laws and strategies which addresses nepotism, budgetary disadvantages and sadism against women in India.

We inhabit in a world where female deities are revered and the ordinary woman is subjugated, harried, ill treated, raped, and abducted every single day. To keep a control on the rising violence in women related cases the government has implemented certain rights which every Indian should know. From a feminist bird's eye view here are those eleven laws which every citizen should obey:

- Discrimination in payment has been abolished.
- Females have right to decorum and gravity.
- Workplace harassment to be dealt with the aid of legal recourse.
- Domestic violence is criminalized.
- Anonymity is granted to women subjected to sexual violence.
- Women cannot be arrested in the night.
- Female rape victims and also sufferers of domestic abuse have the right to avail free legal aid.





- Women can lodge virtual complaints by email or posts. There is no need to be physically present at the police station to lodge a complaint. On receipt of the accusations the SHO should send the cop to record her statement.
- Indecent conduct towards a woman calls for punishment.
- A women stalker is a criminal and is subjected to punishment as per the books of law. Stalking in any form is an offence and needs to be dealt with iron hand.
- Women have the right to file an FIR at any police station. It is a landmark judgment which has been passed by the Supreme Court to save the victim's time and enabling arrest of an offender immediately.

The figures are always appalling when we witness the number sexual or physical savagery against women in India at any given hour, day or year. There are various independent establishments that work

towards assisting women to fight out this constant threat of violence. Their goal is to work towards making the nation a safer place for women by commencing changes in stratagems and orchestrate recognition manoeuvres that aim to enlighten the masses.

#### Their objectives are:

- Extricate women and children from perilous or berserk domains and revamping them at a safe interim or perennial shelter.
- Making a woman financially solvent by either monetary support or suitable education trainings so that she can be financially self-reliant.
- Provide legal recourse to assist the sufferer of sexual or physical barbarism. Discern her rights and instigate the judicial procedure for proper justice attainment.
- Bestow admonishing and psychosomatic convalescence.

But there is a hiccup. Our patriarchal society creates a direct impact on empowerment of rural women which is much less as compared to the urban populace. Bucolic women unlike the citified ones are subjected to inequalities at much higher rates and in all domains of life. An urban educated woman enjoys adequate access to fiscal adequacies, vigor and pedagogy, and often encounters less domiciliary barbarity. Females (both bucolic and citified) who have attained certain level of education have higher problem solving skills and also proves as a good decision maker in the household and the social coterie. Moreover female

education also has a direct insinuation on mental illness, nourishment and also contributes to the well-being among children.

There are further hindrances on the life of a rural woman. As I cited in the beginning of the essay – education, casteism and class divisions are some of them. The lower category, i.e. the scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward castes suffers maximum maternal volatility and female feticides. Unable to bear the medicinal expenditures and also with little or no exposure to education these women aren't allowed to participate in decision making and also faces higher level of sexual abuse which often goes unrecorded. Societal severance amongst the urban females also has a direct impact on women accreditation. Upper class and scholarly females are preferred in areas of healthcare, education and remunerative opportunities. The lower class, less educated females in urban milieu are at a lower access to such facilities. The brisk urbanization and financial upheavals has given rise to illegal slums and slum dwellers. They are unorganized, subjected to frequent raids and demolition, and the dwellers face other form of abuses and insecurities. The women and children are worst affected and are also deprived from the basic human rights.

The above scenario has enforced woman activists to stem in feminism and feminist movement (women's movements) which refers to a series of political campaigns for reforms on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence, all of which fall under the label of feminism and the feminist movement. The movement's priorities vary among nations and communities, and range from opposition to female genital mutilation in one country, to opposition to the glass ceiling in another. There are certain misconceptions surrounding the word 'feminism'. Many people believe it means hating a man or wanting a woman to rule over a man or everything. No.

Feminism simply means believing that men and women are equal, neither is better than the other and neither should be treated with more respect than the other – everyone should be equal on all levels, simple as that.



In closure I say though in spite of so many hardships the women in India have excelled in sectors like medicine, engineering, aviation, civil services, army and teaching the number is still limited. India has still a long way to go. Forge ahead in long strides women. Let these men not over power you. Unite yourselves and put an end to female feticide, educate a girl child and empower a woman. That's how a nation can progress. Enough said! ■

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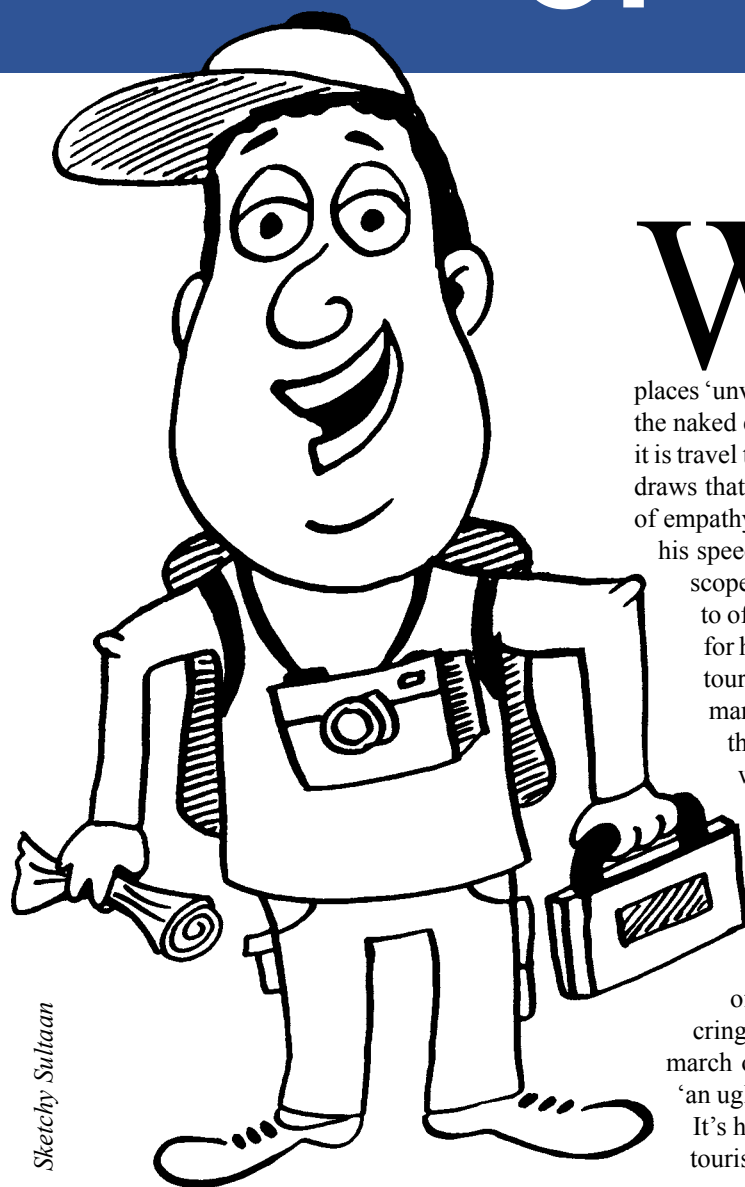
<https://choma.co.za/articles/282/what-is-feminism-and-why-is-it-important>

Rimli Bhattacharya is a gold medalist in Mechanical Engineering from National Institute of Technology, and also holds an MBA in supply chain management. Her essay on mental illness in the anthology "Book of Light" published by Speaking Tiger Publications caught much attention in literary circles. Her writings have appeared in several magazines. She is also a trained classical dancer (Kathak & Odissi forms).



Arvind Passey

# GETTING UNDER THE SKIN OF TOURISM



Sketchy Sultaan

**W**e travel to see ‘beauty of souls in new landscapes’ as Lailah Gifty Akita said, and there are many who believe that tourism is what the world needs most. Wayne Chirisa feels that visiting new places ‘unveils new dimensions of this world not known to the naked eye’ and Leslie Jamison wrote in an essay that it is travel that is forever ‘bringing our bodies somewhere draws that place closer to us, or we to it. It’s a quick fix of empathy’. Even PM Narendra Modi remarked during his speech on Independence Day that ‘there is a huge scope to improve our tourism and India has so much to offer. I know people travel to different countries for holidays, but can we think of visiting at least 15 tourist destinations in India before 2022, when we mark 75 years of freedom’. He, of course, added that it is only through tourism that infrastructure will get a boost, employment opportunities will be created for our youth, and India will obviously gain in an overall perspective.

However, not everyone agrees that tourism has only positives attached to it. I have seen with my own eyes how irresponsible behavior sullies the spirit of tourism and how the calmest of places start cringing in pain. Don DeLillo called tourism ‘the march of stupidity’, Kim Stanley Robinson called it ‘an ugly business, it’s not fit work for human beings. It’s hosting parasites’, and Tahir Shah believes that tourists are ‘more corrosive than millionaires’ and

*Real people live in old houses\_ heritage walk in Ahmedabad*

that ‘the very places they patronize are destroyed by their affection’. David Foster Wallace is convinced that ‘as a tourist, you become economically significant but existentially loathsome, an insect on a dead thing’. Strong words have been expressed both for and against and it isn’t easy to talk about the grand fiction of tourism without getting affected in more than one way.

## Statistical angles to tourism in India

FTA or Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India, according to the figures available with the Ministry of Tourism, has gone up from a mere 2.65 million in the year 2000 to around 11 million in 2018. Add around 6 million NRIs to these arrivals and India tourist figures go way above 17 million. The departure statistics of Indians has gone up from a mere 4.42 million in

2000 to more than 25 million in 2018. The revenue earned from tourism was 1,77,874 crore in 2017 as compared to 15,626 crore in 2000. However, compare this to 1400 million global International Tourist Arrivals out of which 350 million ITAs were for the Asia-Pacific region and it becomes apparent that we in India have a long distance to cover before we can call ourselves tourism-savvy.

What is obvious is that India has a lot to discover, amend, implement, and promote so far as tourism is concerned. Narendra Modi isn’t much off the mark when he insists that Indians need to first move out of their homes and discover the real India... only then we shall be in a position to talk about it with convincing authority and panache. India isn’t just about one or two or three circuits or triangles or scattered gems so far as tourism is concerned. There is more to the country than we



*A small village near Hikkim\_nature, culture, and adventure merge*

can possibly imagine. Yes, statistics do talk about an increase in both domestic and international tourists in the past couple of decades but there is more to be done and yet more to be communicated.

The celebration of tourism in India needs to take off at a high speed and on a high trajectory... and the

country has innumerable gems waiting to be discovered. As I write this article, there is news in the papers about plans to open the Siachen glacier for tourism. This is great news and even though this trip will come with a few security-laden riders, it is definitely going to give tourism the sort of differentiating USP that it has been looking for in earnest now.

### **The scope of tourism in India**

Let me just say that India is a unique opportunity not just for the

foreign traveler but also the domestic tourist. We have with us the slow rhythm of village life to explore, hundreds of off-the-beaten-track destinations, heritage sites that have history scribbled all over, an array of food and cuisines in the states that are as different as different can be, costumes and fashion are inspiring for the visitor as they could be for the creative mind, and local crafts are simply fascinating in their connect to our culture as it has changed over centuries. We have enough to please the different segments of tourists ranging from leisure-seekers to the pilgrimage and culture mind-sets, from history and heritage to adventure

and sports... and as I wrote in an article a few months back, we are equally geared up to regale the weirdest tourist instincts and this includes circuits that are probably unheard of by many but do exist. Thus we can create circuits for the tragedy tourist, the jungleraj tourist, the gaurakshak tourist, the scamgate

tourist, the rath yatra tourist, the procession tourist, the Babaji tourist, the azadi-karna tourist, the farmer suicide tourist, the shoot-the Romeo tourist, the love-jihad tourist. What I am trying to point out is that our tourism think-tank needs to get a creative insight into the art of luring more visitors.

If we look beyond the fun-categorization of tourism ideas in the previous paragraph, we will find that the present decision-makers have already decided to go beyond the usual circuits that have been popular all these years. The government has Swadesh Darshan Scheme that began in 2014-15 and has its eyes set on an integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country without compromising on any environmental concern. The North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit,

Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit are representative of the creative thought that has begun to transform tourism into a completely immersive segment. India's rich historical, religious and natural heritage is powerful enough to provide unique tourism experiences, support communities, and provide employment.

An expansion into creative tourism circuits becomes essential because we have a lot to offer and the range includes a huge mind-boggling repertoire of exploratory opportunities. It has been pointed that tourism generated around 230 billion USD in 2017 which is 9.4% of India's GDP today, was responsible for a humongous lot of jobs in the sector... and all this because of increased numbers in both domestic and foreign tourists. Quite obviously, the target for the future is high, expectations from the sector are high, and political will is there to ensure that this happens.

**The government has Swadesh Darshan Scheme that began in 2014-15 and has its eyes set on an integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country without compromising on any environmental concern.**

*Makhti Pokhra \_ a small village near Chakrata where wooden architecture survives*





*Mawlynnong, the cleanest village in Asia*

### A short appraisal of the tourist

Travelling isn't only about traveler behavior dominating travel promotions as this can get repetitive and lose its charm in due course. After all, how many times can a person stand by the sea, click a selfie, and caption it: 'The endless sea is so much like depth of my eyes'. I mean, you can't keep going to beaches to stand in a colourful bikini and share those pictures. It gets monotonous. You can't go on clicking an insane number of pictures of mountains or rivers only to caption them with words like awesome, restless, enjoy, perfect, purrfect, cool, kewl, and wish-you-were-here-with-me! How many different cones of ice-cream will find their

way into your pictures? How many times can five of you line-up and pose with pouts? How many times will you click pictures of half-eaten dishes in restaurants and caption them with yummy, delicious, go-for-it, or worth-a-try? Travel needs to be more creative than all these clichéd pictures.

This article has already mentioned the sort of creatively

dynamic features that tourism in India has been gifted by well-meaning officials and politicians in power. Look at the way the touristic scope of a few monuments has been expanded in Delhi... we know about the lighting up of Qutub Minar and Safdarjung Tomb and how this has given tourists a new aspect to explore and appreciate. It is this kind of creative interpretation that transforms even an often visited

site into one with renewed sensuality. The tourism ministry has already let it be known that they have a detailed road-map for inspired development of 17 sites and 'the Union Budget 2019-20 has allocated funds for development of tourism, social and physical infrastructure along with an emphasis on conservation of the natural, cultural and heritage resources at these identified destinations'. This step will be the start of a revolution and it has already begun. The Union Budget has allocated marginally more — a rise of 1.82 percent and 7 percent, respectively, to the Tourism and Culture Ministries. While INR 1,378.53 crore has been allocated for building tourism infrastructure, INR 575.50 crore has been allocated for promotion and publicity. This step will ensure that tourism in India gets



the right acceleration and reaches to a position of serious reckoning in the global tourism map.

The psyche of a tourist must get a mention at this stage. Roohi Bhatnagar shares on Facebook her definition of a travel mind-set in an update. She writes:

We were stuck in traffic and cabbie was really upset. "Birmingham is always busy! It was not like this 20 years ago" I smiled and replied, "It's like this in all big cities". "You belong here?", he asked. Belong?!! It's a deep word. No I don't belong here. "So where are you from?". Where I am from? Wow, I was in a fix. Which place shall I say? India- Bangalore- Saharanpur or... and then it brings memories of other cities where I have spent some time or little but good time. I belonged to all these places as I loved all places I had a chance to visit and yet I knew I actually belonged to none of them. Silly heart always longs for home and doesn't know it is home in itself. You are home if you are always with yourself, I thought. "So which place you liked best?", he asked. Huh, it's best wherever I AM.

### The gains

Tourism has a lasting effect on the economic gains for any region that includes the micro-enterprise sector and the buoyant employment quotient there. There is then the overall benefit to the infrastructure umbrella that includes the civic amenities getting better besides the positive catalytic effect on roads, telecommunications, water, and electricity. The more important aspects include the third form of benefit that affects the environment. Yes, a lot goes into the conservation efforts, and it is here that the tourist too has a major role to play. Let me just say that we need not be mere tourists but convert into responsible tourists. It is an aware tourist who actively participates by not allowing his or her actions to negatively affect conservation. Heritage site vandalism can be curbed if we have responsible visitors. I must point out here that besides responsible tourists, it is also the local communities who have the power to drive home such aims. Mawlynnong in Meghalaya is an excellent example of aware locals ensuring that every tourist leaves their village with an enhanced sense of having been environment-friendly.

### What must we focus on?

Image. The image of each and every region in India. The reason is that every corner of our country has immense potential for attracting tourists from every possible category – frivolous or otherwise. Image building of a region obviously involves every aspect of access, connectivity, amenities, and an educated approach by the local communities.

Government intervention through schemes and their implementation is as vital as ensuring that the locally available crafts, cuisines, fashions, and even concerns get the right platform and voice. This is the only way forward. Promoting these regions the world over, including other regions in the country can be done by developing exhibition spaces and markets, organizing festivals, and taking the help of NGOs to communicate the USPs of one region in others as well as in other parts of the world. Not just this, the tourism boards need to get active and must invite writers, bloggers, columnists, YouTubers, social media influencers and others to talk about the charms of their region in every possible language of communication.

The truth is that the stage is now all set for tourism in India to take a massive leap and become a global force. ■

The tourism boards need to get active and must invite writers, bloggers, columnists, YouTubers, social media influencers and others to talk about the charms of their region in every possible language of communication.



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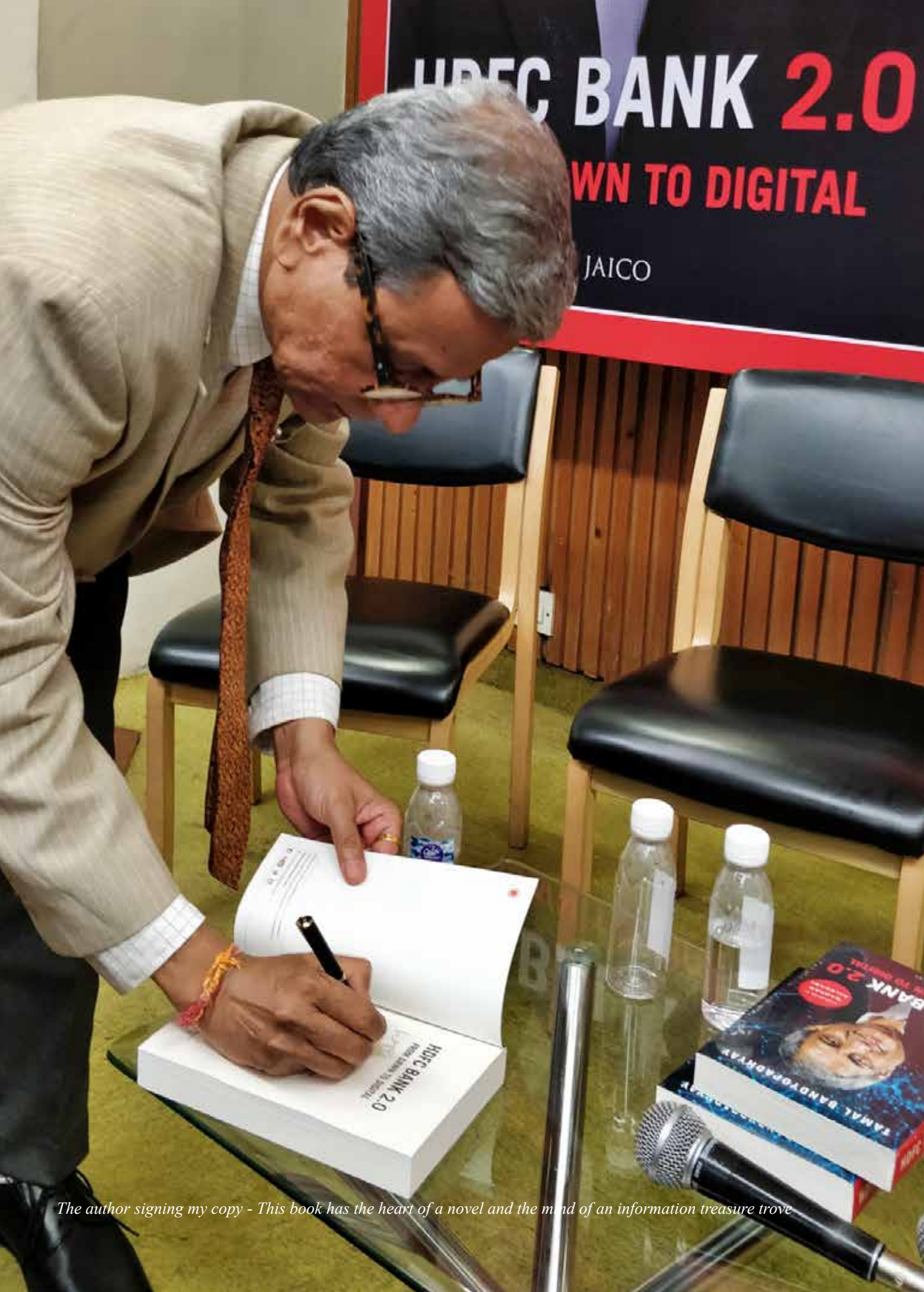
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AWARDS



# WHO SAYS BANKERS ARE BORING?

by Arvind Passey

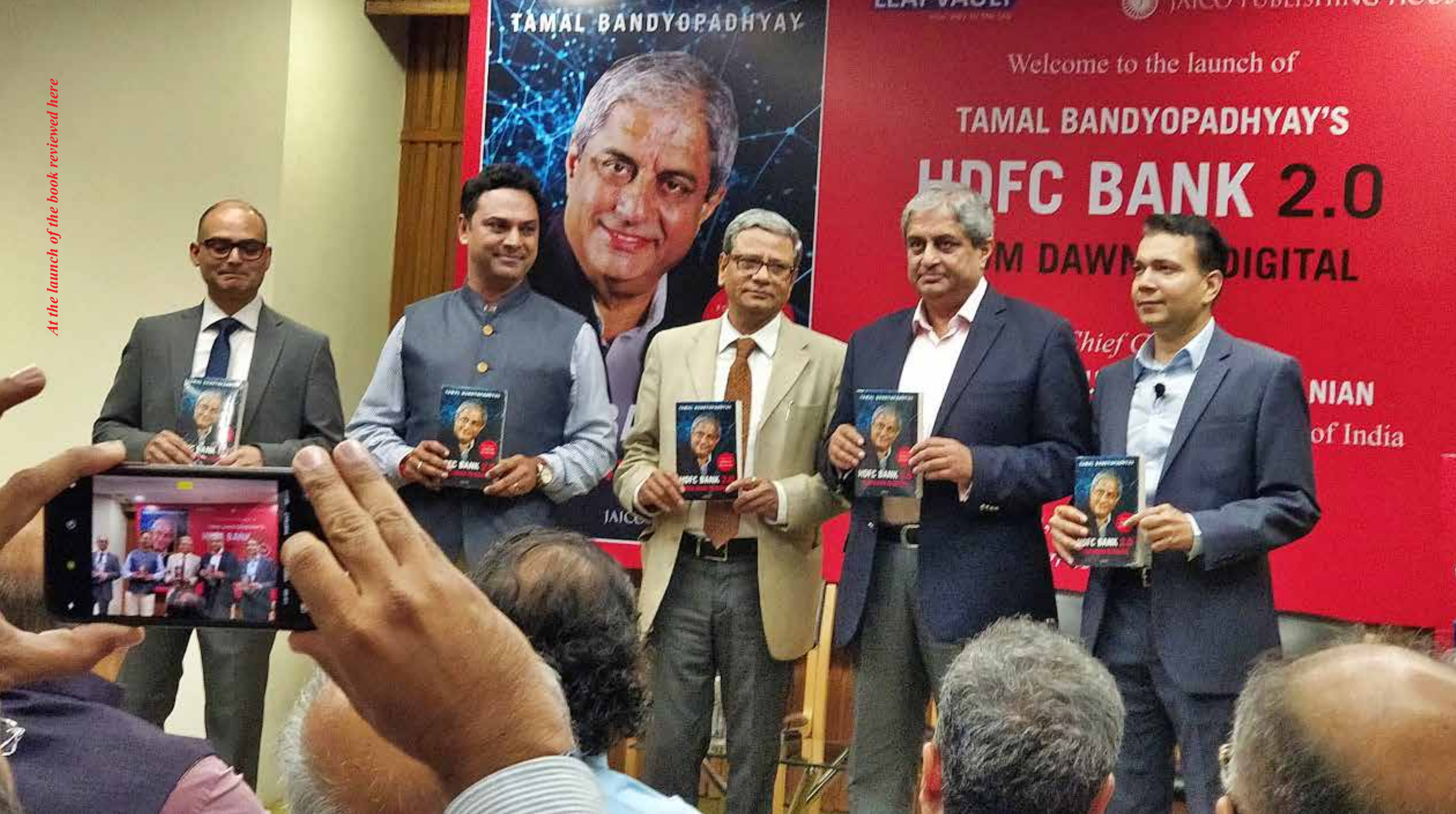


*The author signing my copy - This book has the heart of a novel and the mind of an information treasure trove*

# T

**T**amal Bandhyopadhyay 'tells the exciting tale of how HDFC Bank has transformed itself, especially in the past few years with its digital journey.' The book goes to the inception stage and is brimming with anecdotes that are literally bubbling with a fervor that is both serious in intent and positively readable. The way we look at HDFC Bank today is that it effectively 'combines global trends in technology like smartphones, AI, the cloud, etc. with the state-of-the-art infrastructure that India had built as digital public goods – Aadhaar, eKYC, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and other elements of the India stacks. We know that its chatbot, the Electronic Virtual Assistant (EVA), now handles 6,00,000 queries a month and has completed 8.7 million interactions since its launch' as Nandan Nilekani expresses in his foreword in the book.

Tamal's first book 'A bang for the buck' was written in 2012 and HDFC 2.0 is being launched in 2019 which is also the 25th anniversary of the bank. **HDFC Bank 2.0 – from dawn to digital** written by *Tamal Bandhyopadhyay* reads like a thriller and a romance and yet maintains the seriously fact-filled stance of a work that has informative value for future generations who have an interest in fiscal intricacies.

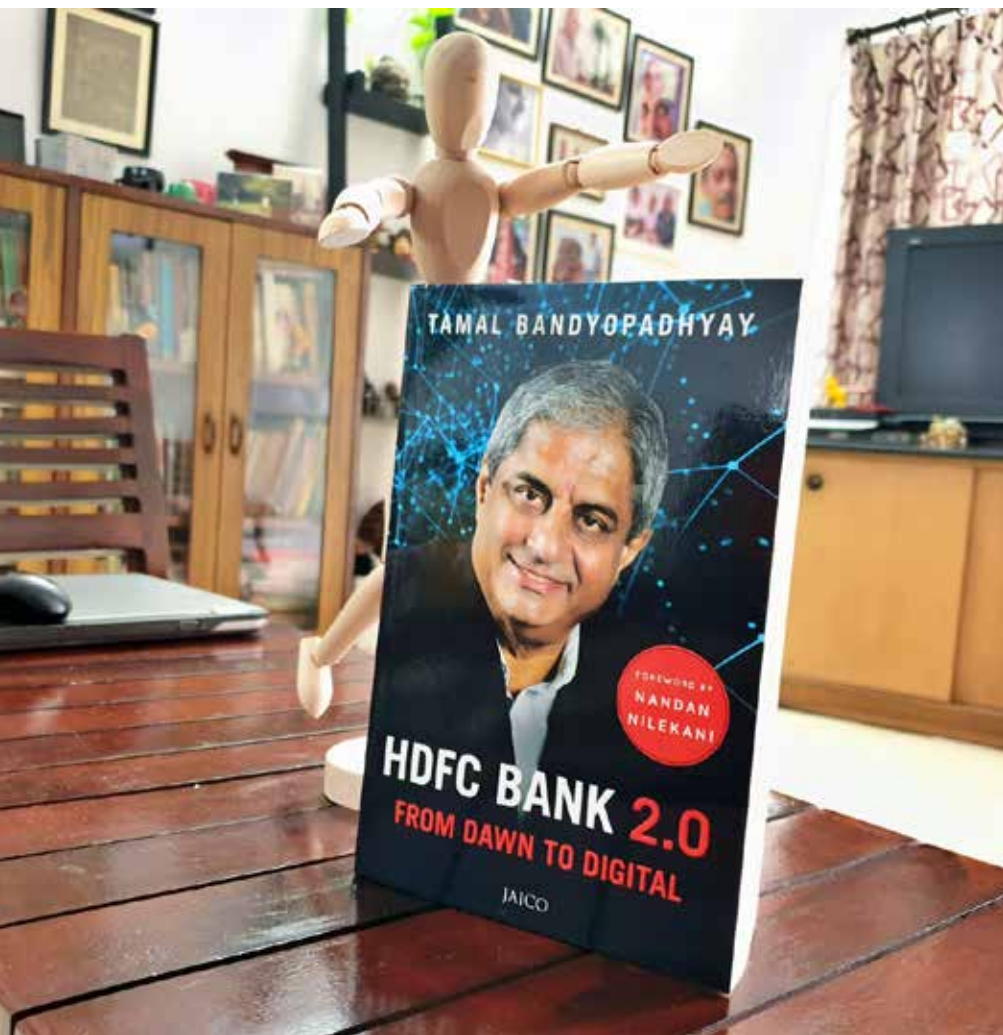


The book has enthralling content and I must mention here Dr Krishnamurthy Subramanian (Chief Economic Advisor, GOI), Aditya Puri (MD, HDFC Bank), Mr. Rajnish Kumar (Chairman, SBI) and others from the banking and financial world, who were there at the launch, the words that conversed with the audience were

a quaint concoction of actionable thoughts, humour, and a memorable recollection of incidents relevant to banking. For instance, Dr Subramanian mentioned that though bankers were conventionally assumed to be boring, 'this joke is about a about a woman who approaches a banker, and says, "Are you single?" The banker

responds by saying that it was not the inquiry counter'. Dr Subramanian also pointed out that 'the lessons that are there in the book have relevance for the country as well as the banking sector, especially, you know, the importance of technology today. And that's something that many of our banks can certainly learn.'

The transition from conventional or analog banking to one that was thoroughly soaked in the vibrant hues of new-age technological innovations obviously happened because of leadership who willingly listened to the whispers of the future. After all these whispers were all about somebody using a simpler process to



HDFC Bank 2.0 - from dawn to digital... review

Readers will love the way tequila shots in the evenings hobnob with **chromosomal ideas revolving around spending less but spending smart** to get a fair insight into the path that the bank had adopted.

give a loan faster, a simpler process at a lower cost for payment of money, a better process that walked the talk with telecommunications, computing, social mobility and artificial intelligence and primarily to make systems efficient.

The book goes way beyond being readable as it also diligently jots down every little story that finally sum up what HDFC represents. The stories span both the analog and the shift to technology years. The story of the lucky 13 being chosen in the initial stages and who were free to 'bring their own people to the bank, people who would share the same dream and passion' but these teams were not to be too large as 'this would make it difficult for HDFC Bank to evolve its own culture'. The short but incisive snippets about Monday morning meetings to transform an abstract vision into actions that discernably moved ahead, all those training sessions under a tree to bring home the fact that visions of success do not get obfuscated by mundane obstacles, and the ways in which problems like ATM malfunctioning are simply as spell-binding as some of the others that have found their way into the heart of the narrative. Readers will love the way tequila shots in the evenings hobnob with chromosomal ideas revolving around spending less but spending smart to get a fair insight into the path that the bank had adopted.

The financial wizards who had taken charge of raising this baby realized soon enough that they 'couldn't be a big bank dealing with only triple-A clients' and thus began their march into the arena of retail banking franchise as this was the right way to create maximum value. The story, and I'm not really off the mark in using the word story here, of HDFC Bank begins and sticks to the primal concept of making banking simple and accessible to larger numbers and one of the mantras that gets mentioned often is the ability of their think-tank to sniff every opportunity. I wasn't really surprised to find the author admitting that 'HDFC Bank is staid and waits for opportunities but emerges a winner at the end of the day'. Success sans flamboyance forms the genetic code of HDFC Bank and even the foreword mentions that the bank is 'monotonously predictable on most financial parameters'. After all, Aditya's vision 'was to create an Indian bank that could compete with the best on global parameters. India's economic liberalization, he believed, would give the new bank a fantastic opportunity.'

The benefit of yearning to be able to compete with the best also means not becoming a dinosaur in the tech-savvy world of new-age banking. As Aditya said in the discussion during the launch of this book, 'There's no problem that cannot be solved with the help of technology. Technology can solve a problem. But you have to define what solution you want. So it's not going to be the be all and end all.' What matters most is staying ahead of the curve and 'change what is necessary for the future', for instance, HDFC had 'foreseen the

**HDFC Bank is staid and waits for opportunities but emerges a winner at the end of the day**

**HDFC had 'foreseen the digital banking revolution and knew a convergence would happen and people would want everything on phone'.**

digital banking revolution and knew a convergence would happen and people would want everything on phone'. The way things are moving today it is 'uninterrupted existence, proven track record, investment in advanced technology to understand customer behavior, the ability to invest in innovations and right platforms, and the willingness to partner with big players' that is going to give consumers the right reasons to go on placing their trust in banking. Quite obviously then, the 'next phase of growth will be driven by digital strategy'.

What comes through effectively in the book is the way change management was harnessed because the tenets of behavioral economics does mention that people have a lot of inertia and are resistant to change. It is thus the choice architecture that needs to be kept going at the right pace and in the right direction. The bank realized that digitization has a creatively catalytic impact on almost every aspect of banking, that data and technology can give enough information to make sane decisions, and yes, technology ensures that a larger geography can be reached.

This book has the heart of a novel and the mind of an information treasure. It is obviously a work of non-fiction that isn't going to be dated ever as the author has chronicled facts connected to actions that have led to where HDFC stands today. In more than one way, this book isn't just about a bank but about banking and the way banking needs to anticipate the future and take critical decisions. And yes, banking is full of remarkable stories that can all come together to stitch an entire chapter in business strategy. This book tells me that banking isn't boring at all. ■

# Career Conversations

with Avadhesh Dixit



**Avadhesh Dixit** is Head HR (India Region) at Moody's corporation. He is a global HR leader who has led HR function at GE Capital, TCS and CMC Ltd both in India and outside India.

## "THE BEST WAY TO PREDICT THE FUTURE IS TO CREATE IT"

Abraham Lincoln

### Disruptive Technologies: Impact on Jobs and careers

Thanks a lot for your positive response to career conversations with me! Your positive feedback on last conversation around leadership skills in the time of continuous change is highly encouraging. Your feedback should continue to flow and I promise to keep addressing your most pressing career concerns based on what we are experiencing at workplace. In the last issue we discussed Leadership skills that create successful leaders and that too in times of disruptive change. In this feature, I want to delve into the related subject of technology and its potential impact on jobs & careers.

As I mentioned in my previous articles, the world is going through an interesting phase of its development and change. This change is marked by rapid advancement in technology across Industries and businesses. Technology is causing wide ranging disruptions in business models and the way companies operate and lead the market place. Automation has been accelerated by

technologies like Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain etc. While some of these technologies are leading to higher productivity and efficiency. They also have the potential to aggravate anxiety around future of jobs, wages, careers and the future of work itself. There has not been a single management function that has not been impacted by advancement in technology.

McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) research on the automation potential of the global economy, focusing on 46 countries representing about 80 percent of the global workforce, has examined more than 2,000 work activities and quantified the technical feasibility of automating each of them.

MGI found that about 60 percent of all jobs have at least 30 percent of activities that are technically automatable, based on technologies available today. This means that most jobs will change, and more people will have to work with technology. An additional important finding is that even if whole jobs are not automated, partial automation (where only some activities that make up a job are automated) will impact almost all jobs to a greater or lesser degree, not just factory workers and clerks, but landscape gardeners and dental lab technicians, fashion designers, insurance sales representatives, and also CEOs

So how should you respond to some of these changes around you? Is this real and do you have reasons to worry? Here is the list of things that help potentially help you ride the wave of change and keep your job and career competitive!

Here you go!

**Brushing aside the problem as another fad may prove to be damaging to your long term career prospects. Hence, the first step is to accept that some of these changes are to be studied, followed and to be acted upon.**

- **Acknowledge the problem:** The first step to finding a solution to any problem is to acknowledge the problem itself. Denial of its existence is not helpful at all. It is an established fact that technological advancement is forcing organizations to relook at their business models, operating ecosystem and larger work system design. Work system design is all about how the work is being delivered by leveraging talent that may or may not reside within the organization. All these changes definitely impact how the jobs are going to be organized and how the newer careers options will emerge. Brushing aside the problem as another fad may prove to be damaging to your long term career prospects. Hence, the first step is to accept that some of these changes are to be studied, followed and to be acted upon.
- **Assess your current skills and Bridge Gaps:** Once you have acknowledged and accepted that technology and other factors like changing work system design may impact you, the next step is to take stock of your current skill set in relation to what is happening around you. Some of the questions that may help you in the process of self-assessment are as follows.

- Is my skill-set still in demand within my organization or outside it? There are good chances that newer versions of the skill (more pertinent if you work in technology) may have been discovered or entirely different technologies/skills may be required to do the job that you do? Answerw to this question will tell you where you stand vis-a-vis your environment.
- Can my job or skill set be subjected to automation? It's not difficult to figure this out. There are good chances that activities of the job that are repeatable and predictable are more susceptible to automation. List down all the activities that you perform as part of the job and start assigning automation probability to all written down activities. The percentage of activities in your job which have potential to get automated will tell you the extent of automation risk that your job carries. It's obvious that if you carry this risk then start the dialogue with your manager and HR partners for potential expansion or rotation of your job.
- Does my job involve multi-disciplinary application of knowledge and skills? There is enough research to suggest that it is not easy to automate jobs that may involve application of multi-disciplinary skills or skills that require complex human interactions. I would wonder if jobs that involve counselling, behavioral therapy, inspiring people etc. can ever be automated fully. Some of these skills have application of emotional intelligence, relationship building, listening, language skills and communication at the core of it. You need to evaluate if your job also involves some combination of these skills.
- Am I continuously learning and reskilling myself? Identifying gaps from the above mentioned processes is not enough. You have to act to bridge the gaps. Remaining relevant all the time requires that one is learning all the time. Evaluate if your skills are getting obsolete and then invest time in re-skilling yourself. Learning also happens when you change jobs within the company or outside the company. You have to keep adding skills to your job at all the time. I come across people in organizations who do not make any effort to enhance their knowledge or skills or are stuck in same job for years. There comes the time when they are staring at redundancy as newer people with newer skills are ready to replace them. By that time it's too late to explain your relevance to the organization. Hence wake up and start that learning process here and now.

**Learning also happens when you change jobs within the company or outside the company. You have to keep adding skills to your job at all the time. I come across people in organizations who do not make any effort to enhance their knowledge or skills or are stuck in same job for years.**

- **Functional and Technical Skills are not enough:** As you move up in the organization, you will realize that functional and technical skills are not the only skills that will make you successful. Many other soft skills like people management, stakeholder management, listening, resolving conflict, empathy etc. will become very crucial to your success. Interestingly, as mentioned above, these are also skills that are tough to automate as they are multi-disciplinary in nature. Best way to develop these skills through seeking formal and informal feedback. Many organizations have formal systems in place to get 360 degree view of managers and leaders. Volunteer to participate in this process and seek feedback from your peers, bosses and subordinate and possibly your customers as well. This feedback will give you insights on your strength and improvement areas. Identify internal or external programs to develop your improvement areas and to re-inforce your strengths. You can also informally seek feedback from your close colleagues on your managerial style. Success Skills of future are surely beyond what you know as part of your functional and technical education.
- **Understand and recognize the changing work system design:** I mentioned in my previous article that withthe advent of sophisticated tools and technology the nature of work is undergoing tremendous change. Even the way the work is being conceived and delivered is changing rapidly. It's not uncommon for employees to work from home, cars, hotels and airports as technology has power to enable this. This significantly changes the definition of workplace and job itself. Nature of employment is also undergoing change. Traditionally there was only one form of employment i.e. Full Time employment. With technology, people are opting to become part time workers as large variety of work can be delivered from anywhere in the world. Technology has enabled the 'Gig Economy' to expand. There are experts who do not want to work for only one employer but would rather prefer to offer their expertise to multiple employers. You need to evaluate if you have capability to cope up with this kind of work and job design. While you may be

comfortable in full time job, someone ( called gigsters) will come and take away your job as they can do it from anywhere in the world and do not necessarily need organizational boundaries. The point is to remain open and vigilant about how the work systems are changing and what this means for your job and career.

- **Silver lining:** Amidst all these changes on technology side, we also have good news that comes with technological advancement. History is full of examples where many new jobs have been created by technology while it eliminated many. Every advancement in technology also comes with opportunities for jobs and alternate careers. A 2011 study by McKinsey's Paris office found that the Internet had destroyed 500,000 jobs in France in the previous 15 years—but at the same timecreated 1.2 million others, a net addition of 700,000, or 2.4 jobs created for every job destroyed. The growing role of big data in the economy and business will create a significant need for statisticians and data analysts MGI in 2016 study estimates a shortfall of up to 250,000 data scientists in the United States alone in a decade. What we need to do is to track these changes, respond to them and keep ahead of them. It is evident that Automation fueled by Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, data science etc. is creating millions of jobs across the globe. There is no way we can stop technology from driving these changes but we can always be more prepared to adopt them and seize the opportunities they offer.

Times are going to remain disruptive and technology will disrupt jobs and careers. It will also bring opportunities along the way. Our response will decide whether we get impacted or lead the way. ■

IN CONVERSATION &gt; KAMALINI NATESAN

## NAKED BENEATH THE MIDNIGHT SUN

Travelling away from the familiar sheds new light upon all that is familiar. Kamalini Natesan travels into the heart of her tale in a conversation with Arvind Passey



Kamalini Natesan

Good writing is scarce these days and when one knows a writer who has already impressed the world through her social media updates, one knows that a book written by her has to be worth reading. Kamalini Natesan is one such person who has the sort of experiences that would have a lot to communicate to a reader of fiction. When one knows a writer to have written poetry as well that has been applauded one knows intuitively that even her prose offering is going to be as lyrical and as rhythmic as life generally is.

No, I haven't yet read the book and so this post isn't a review. However, I did manage to ask the writer a few questions that would interest anyone searching for a good tale to read. Kamalini, as I gather, is a well-travelled person and I assumed that the book would be some sort of a travelogue. The first question, therefore, reflected that basic curiosity and I asked, 'One looks at the cover and wonders immediately -- is it a fictional tale or a travelogue? Are there short pieces or is the entire narrative connected by the experiences of the main character? How do you describe the book?'

She answered, 'The book is a seamless story, as one chapter moves into another, covering Suchareeta, the protagonist's experiences in Norway. Yes, the narrative is connected. It is a fictional tale, drawn from real life experiences. The book is best described as a young person's story, wherein she discovers parts of her forgotten self. **Travelling away from the familiar sheds new light upon all that is familiar.**' Most readers are forever wanting to understand the publishing process and would love to know something about the conversations that go on



with the publisher once the manuscript has been submitted. So when I asked her about this and how easy or difficult had been her conversations with the publisher throughout the publishing process, she said, 'Olympia, UK, was hugely supportive and patient. During the editing process, I went through a family crisis and it took me far longer to revert with the edits than one would imagine. They have been caring and patient, going back and forth with as many edits as I wished to bring to my original manuscript. The conversations with my manager were in sync, polite

and I always received answers to as many queries, as a debut novelist might wish to put forth.'

Those of you who have browsed the net will have noticed the price difference between the print and the e-book version. I asked the author, 'How do you explain this difference?'

Kamalini informed me that 'the disadvantage of having a foreign publisher is that you are not in control or even in touch with the business side of your book. Olympia retails the book in its paperback and e-versions, and they do not decide the pricing. I frankly do not know how this works. On asking I was given the above explanation.'

I've already mentioned that the author knows and navigates her thoughts through words like a pro. The next question obviously had to be one about the reasons for the gap between her writing and releasing the book finally. Kamalini told me that she began releasing updates only when once she knew the actual date of her book release and so 'I started 'advertising' my book only a month before its release as I had been asked to by my publicity Manager. I thought that was considered normal in this day and age.'

**Travelling away from the familiar sheds new light upon all that is familiar.'** Most readers are forever wanting to understand the publishing process and would love to know something about the conversations that go on with the publisher once the manuscript has been submitted.



# NAKED BENEATH THE MIDNIGHT SUN

KAMALINI NATESAN

It was time for me to hop from the publishing to the writing process and I asked, *'Poetry in prose is how someone once defined one of your short pieces on the social media. Does this kind of control over the written word come with riyaz or is it something that some people just have it in them?'*

Kamalini Natesan: 'Thank you! Yes, *riyaz* is a good word. I think writing is a natural calling, yet one needs to hone one's skills- one needs to write- to practice – to edit, to de-clutter.

To produce anything of a certain caliber that would merit a read and even a reread, one must write, there's no escaping that.

What I do think is that it is always good to have a few writer friends to read your pieces, and critique you. To get perspective on one's craft it is vital to have a cluster of folk whose opinion you respect.'

*'How important has reading been for your writing instinct?'*

'I cannot over-emphasize the importance of reading good work. **Reading has fired my imagination and gifted me words and ideas and aided my flights of fantasy like nothing else.'**

*'How important, do you believe, are short-term writing sessions or workshops for budding writers?'*

Kamalini Natesan: 'Short-term writing sessions, many of which I have attended, are interesting and more importantly, add to one's repertoire if you find a good mentor. One always does. **Writing workshops expose a budding writer to different genres, and force the imagination to open wide its doors to all sorts of skills.** Often one discovers one's talent, and meets folk that one would normally neither befriend nor run across in daily living. They are useful and can trigger

more than just brilliant ideas. Interacting with other writers has proved enriching.'

There are so many authors busy with marketing their own work these days and there is an equal number complaining about the writer-publisher-reader equation as this can be cost-intensive besides caging an author in a game-play that is alien to the psyche of a writer. Some writers that I have talked to, have felt that the marketing process can be a terrible drag on their creative instincts. When I asked Kamalini about this, she said, 'I was unaware of the fact that I needed to market my book. I believed that was the job of the publisher. However, I realise that some amount of marketing needs to be done by the author as well. So when book marketers approached me, I was appalled at how much they charge for this. I was not ready to shell out so much money. Eventually, I did select one company, which will do some amount of marketing for me. Let's see how effective they will be. For the rest, **I'm relying on reviews and bloggers.** Olympia themselves, are doing some publicity, but mostly in the UK.'

*'Do you think writers must be as immersive about the promotions and sales of their book as they are about the writing process?'*

Kamalini Natesan: 'I believe in this day and age, they should be. I'm not quite there, but am learning along the way.'

*'What message do you have for those who haven't yet read your book?'*

Kamalini Natesan: 'I have a feeling that this book is one that you need to take your time to read, and travel with Suchareeta as she grows from a young, naïve Indian girl in her twenties, to one that has understood that right or wrong is not an absolute. She comes to realise that life is about living and breathing in the moments richly endowed with experiences. It is in allowing oneself to take in without reserve that the experiences become part of your persona. They trigger the discovery of the beauty that lies within.

If my novel can convey this message, and if the reader resonates with the characters in my story, I would be more than pleased. I don't know what a successful novel must have, but my book will give rise to some questions within the reader. And each one will have different answers. I would love it if a reader came away feeling he has not wasted his time, and was thrilled to have been to Norway with Suchu.' ■



# RISE IN YOUR EYES

**Braj Kishor Gupta**  
Chief Mentor, GiantStep, Bangalore

# Y

ou are both a designer piece and the Designer's piece. You came only on demand. Your worth lies in being aware of this unique fact! You can take legitimate pride in being who you are and where you are. Your life is pre-ordained to fulfil certain lofty ideals and coveted goals. No one can ever toss you up nor can your presence be glossed over. You are cut out for a distinct role in life and not just for dancing to the tune of others.

The challenge that you have is to rise first in your own eyes. This is the best thing that can ever happen to anyone. This is a sign of having high self-esteem, without which modern life loses focus. This sense of pride must reflect from the eyes, irrespective of what society thinks or assumes. This is

possible when you find out what makes your heart sway in joy. This truly enhances your belief system as well as the intrinsic worth of your life. Discover your calling and innate potential first, and you will find yourself living at the most opportune time in the history of human race.

As a privileged member of society, you can design your tomorrow only today. Let your confidence add to the Nation's confidence. You are the co-creator of new destiny. No experience can be ultimate for you; you must redefine your experience before it can define your life. It is time for you not to be basking in the past glory but to explore the possibilities of the present. Can you see the opportunities that lie beyond the stumbling blocks? That is the road ahead! As a bud is destined to blossom, so are you my young friend! So says, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam in his beautiful book 'You Are Born to Blossom' The budding minds of this vast country would do well just by paying heed to the wise counsel of Goethe

'To have more, you must first be more'

When you aspire to have more and become better and brighter in life, you will naturally 'Rise in Your Eyes'. ■

The writer is a leading Educationist. He is the Chief Mentor at GiantStep, Bangalore.

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