

# brainfeed



Scan for more info

October 2022

Volume IX

Issue 7

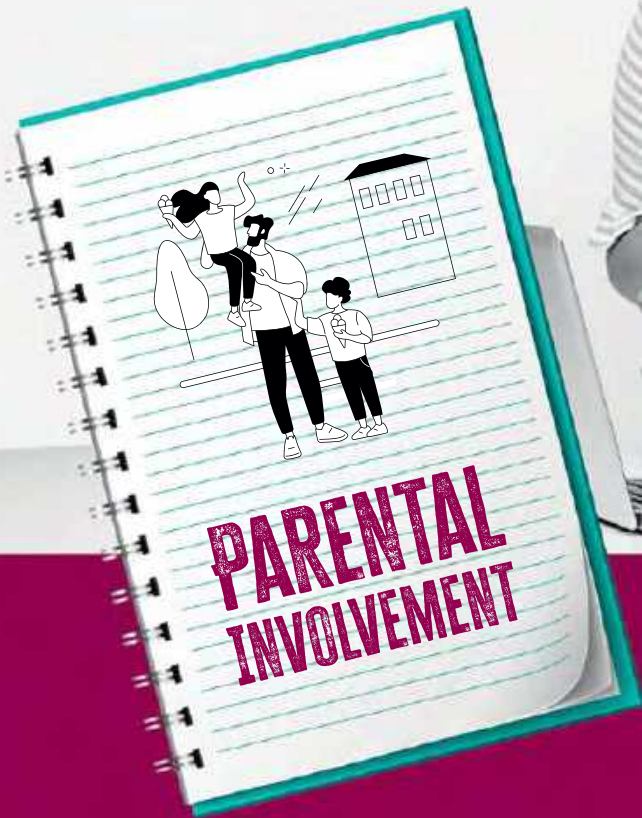
₹75



## The Change Makers

### Parental involvement

entails parents' participation in the educational process and experiences of their children. This includes discussing school activities, supervising and helping with learning activities at home and contact with school staff.



### Why is it important?

Supportive discussions between child and parent concerning school-related matters, such as assistance with and planning of schoolwork, have a strong positive relationship to academic achievement. Parental expectations also impact students' aspirations, resulting in higher academic achievement. Strong parent-teacher partnerships teachers are developed and sustained through effective communication.

To Educate, To Inspire, To Make a Difference.



**Address :** Survey 132/6, Next to Wipro SEZ – Gopanapalli Campus, Vattinagulapally, Beyond Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana, India 500075

## ADMISSIONS OPEN

**CBSE Pre-Primary to Senior Secondary**

Session 2022-2023

**+91 90148 12121**



Mr. Lakshminarayananasamy  
Chairman



Mrs. Suguna.I  
Managing Trustee



# SUGUNA INSTITUTIONS

## Creating Global Citizens

Suguna Institutions Coimbatore is committed to the holistic development of students by giving impetus to academics, interpersonal skills and the values to thrive in an ever-changing world. Our team help the learners keep pace with the dynamic changes. We have integrated arts and sports with academics to smoothen the creases. This wholesome learning is achieved with state-of-art sports facilities like synthetic athletic tracks, indoor basketball cum badminton courts and Astroturf for hockey. Apart from this, the students are also given training in Arts, Music, Dance and Yoga. A multimedia suite for soft skills, iPads in classrooms and an exclusive iPad lab enable our learners to stay abreast with the latest advancements.



**STEP IN AS A TODDLER... WALK OUT AN ACHIEVER!**



### SUGUNA PIP SCHOOL

(A CBSE Affiliated Sr. Sec. School)  
Nehru Nagar, Kalapatty Road,  
Coimbatore - 641014,  
Phone: +91 75026 39000  
Email: sugunapip@yahoo.com  
Web: <http://sugunapips.in>



### SUGUNA COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Nehru Nagar, Kalapatty Road,  
Coimbatore, Tamilnadu - 641014,  
Phone: +91 77088 68828 / 94876 87437  
Email: [sugucoe@gmail.com](mailto:sugucoe@gmail.com)  
Web: <https://www.sugunace.com>



### SUGUNA RIP V MATRICULATION HR. SEC. SCHOOL

102, Dr.Radhakrishna Road, Doctor's Colony,  
Gandhipuram, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu - 641012  
Phone: +91 93855 36163  
Email: [sugunarips@gmail.com](mailto:sugunarips@gmail.com)  
Web: <http://www.sugunaripv.com>



### SUGUNA COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE

Nehru Nagar, Kalapatty Road,  
Coimbatore, Tamilnadu - 641014,  
Phone: +91 99438 60555 / 93440 21151  
Email: [principal@sugunacas.com](mailto:principal@sugunacas.com)  
Web: <https://www.sugunacas.com>



### SUGUNA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

(Affiliated to CBSE-Affiliation No.1930865)  
102 A, Dr. Radhakrishnan Road, Doctor's Colony,  
Gandhipuram, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu - 641012  
Phone: 0422 2529777 / 2522333  
Email: [info@sugunaintl.in](mailto:info@sugunaintl.in)  
Web: <https://www.sugunaintl.com>



### SUGUNA POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE

Nehru Nagar, Kalapatty Road,  
Coimbatore, Tamilnadu - 641014,  
Phone: +91 96008 60934 / 88700 08623  
Email: [sugunapolytechniccollege@gmail.com](mailto:sugunapolytechniccollege@gmail.com)  
Web: <https://www.sugunapolytechnic.com>



### Spips Pre School

102, Dr. Radhakrishnan Road, Doctor's Colony, Gandhipuram, Coimbatore,  
Tamilnadu - 641012. Tel: +91 422 2526000, 9367979000  
Email: [spips.prekg@gmail.com](mailto:spips.prekg@gmail.com)

# C Contents

## COVER STORY

# 10 The Change Makers



All for the joy of learning <b>AARATI SAVUR</b>	12	Designer turned educator <b>KIRAN BIR SETHI</b>	30
Man behind Bachpan Schools <b>AJAY GUPTA</b>	14	Leader with a purpose <b>LATA VAIDYANATHAN</b>	32
Adding a human element to education <b>ANAND PRAKASH SHARMA</b>	16	Harbinger of love & compassion <b>LOBSANG PHUNTSOK</b>	34
Tinkering for betterment <b>ANIL PRADHAN</b>	18	SMS – One of World’s top 10 Inspirational Schools <b>MAMOON AKHTAR</b>	36
To teachers, with love <b>DR. ASHOK KUMAR PANDEY</b>	20	Taking education to the next level <b>DR. MANJULA POOJA SHROFF</b>	38
Exponent of learning through Guided Discovery <b>ASHOK KUMAR THAKUR</b>	22	NICE school, nice thoughts <b>P. PURNACHANDRA RAO</b>	40
Civil servant turned ace edupreneur <b>DR. DEEPAK MADHOK</b>	24	Making RTE meaningful <b>SAMINA BANO</b>	42
School dropout turns saviour <b>GAZI JALALUDDIN</b>	26	Arts as a vehicle for learning <b>SRIRAM V AYER</b>	46
No teaching pedagogy is his mantra <b>JINAN K B</b>	28	In the service of poorest of the poor <b>SUDHA VARGHESE</b>	48
		Dedicated to early childhood education <b>DR. SWATI POPAT VATS</b>	50

SCHOOL MART™

# SCHOOL DESIGN & RENOVATION



GREENSCHOOLS - MODERN GURUKULS - STEM SCHOOLS - SPORTS SCHOOLS - PORTABLE SCHOOLS - PLAY SC



NEP 2020 READY SCHOOLS - PHYGITAL SCHOOLS - TOTALLY DIGITAL SCHOOLS - FUTURISTIC SCHOOLS - NURSE



SMALL SCHOOL DESIGN - GIANT KINDERGARTENS - THEME SCHOOLS - MODULAR SCHOOLS - LOW COST SCHO

YOUR BUDGET FRIENDLY  
SCHOOL DESIGN FIRM,  
WITH COMPLETE INHOUSE  
MANUFACTURING, DESIGN  
& TECH TEAM



- PHYGITAL SCHOOL DESIGN
- PHYGITAL LABS & LIBRARIES
- NEP READY CLASSROOM DESIGN & SUPPLY
- SMART SPORTS [ WITH SPORTS TECH ]
- SCHOOL RENOVATION WITH NEW ENVIRONMENTS [ ENGLISH VILLAGE, DISCOVERYPOD, MATHEMATICA.. MORE
- SCHOOL FURNITURE WITH 5+ YR WARRANTY

WE WORK AT AND SHIP TO ALL MAJOR STATES OF INDIA .

📞/wa : +91 98660 91111




[www.schoolmart.in](http://www.schoolmart.in)

# SRI PRAKASH JUNIOR COLLEGE

## SPECTACULAR Results in IPE 2022

Jr. Inter - 2022



**State 2<sup>nd</sup> MARK**  
CH.JYOTSNA AKHILA

**MPC 465** /470



**BiPC 432** /440



**BiPC 430** /440



**MPC 462** /470



**MPC 463** /470



**461** /470 **MPC**



**460** /470 **MPC**

And many more...

Sr. Inter - 2022



**MPC 981** /1000

S.HARSHITHA



**972** /1000 **BiPC**

J.VEVINA SRI



**MPC 972** /1000



**BiPC 965** /1000



**MPC 964** /1000



**MPC 964** /1000



**963** /1000 **MPC**



**961** /1000 **MPC**

And many more...

Courses Offered **MPC+IIT | BiPC+NEET** (STATE / CBSE Board)



**SRI PRAKASH**  
Junior College

PAYAKARAOPETA - TUNI  
09246693833, 09246634999  
09247728253 / [www.spjc.sriprakash.org](http://www.spjc.sriprakash.org)

3 Countries | 29 States | 16+ Years of Expertise | 750+ Pre-Schools | 6+ Riverstone Schools



Preschool



K-12 School



Daycare

# INDIA'S LEADING PRESCHOOL CHAIN

Call us :  
+91 98804 57004  
[www.hellokids.co.in](http://www.hellokids.co.in)

Physical Skills

Early Learning

Love & Caring

Creativity &

Imagination

Good Manners & Healthy Habits



School  
Consultant  
India



Digital  
Marketing  
School, Preschools  
& Colleges



Curriculum /  
Syllabus  
School & Preschool



School Set Up  
Furniture  
Play Equipments  
Painting



Training  
Business Training  
Marketing Training  
Teachers Training



Student Kit  
Books  
Bags  
Uniform

95133 61641 / 96328 60200



I am very glad to have read the September edition of Brainfeed Magazine. It has opened my eyes to the need for Career Counseling in schools. I always wanted my students to excel in the exams, nothing more. But, after reading the notes from the experts, I am convinced that students should be provided with proper career counseling and guidance to let them choose from the plethora of options in front of them.

**Ebte haz Tasneem, MES School, Guwahati**

I didn't know that there were so many drone career options. All I knew was that drones were used by the military and some other people for taking photographs. I am sure that there are many people like me. Articles like the one on drones published in September are keeping people like me updated on various new job avenues.

**Deepak Majumdar, Ahmedabad**

Indian education system definitely needs a better career guidance model. During our times, career guidance was laughable and while things have improved with time, we still have a long way to go. But the NEP gives me hope that soon these flaws in our education system will be ironed out.

**Priyank Nair, Mumbai**

I have been a reader of Brainfeed Magazine for years. But it is the first time that I am sending a response. I am compelled to write this letter to appreciate the efforts made by your team in bringing out such a wonderful magazine.

The September issue had so many insightful articles. The importance of career counselling was an eye-opener for me. I always believed that the counselling cells in schools are just a sham to lure away parents' money. Now that I have understood its importance, I will definitely work with the authorities of my daughter's school to improve the functioning of the career counselling cell.

**Radhika Tiwari, Bhopal**

There were articles about studying abroad in last month's magazine. I understand the lure of high-paying jobs in foreign countries. It is all but human to fall for such temptations, after all, who doesn't want a better life? While I recognise the merits of these jobs that the previous month's magazine rightly focused on, I can't help but think that it would have been better if there were articles that discussed the importance of staying back in India and working to develop it further. Many prominent Indians have, in the past, left India for gainful employment abroad. I can't help but imagine how India would have developed if these intellectuals and geniuses had stayed back and worked for our country. It is well that we send our students to study abroad, but there should be more articles talking about the importance of returning to our country and helping it grow.

**Kali Krishna Verma,**  
St. Joseph's School, Bangalore

(Readers can send in their suggestions/feedback to [info@brainfeedmagazine.com](mailto:info@brainfeedmagazine.com) by 10<sup>th</sup> of every month)



Scan for more Info

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE & E-MAG  
[brainfeedmagazine.com](http://brainfeedmagazine.com)



AND FOLLOW US ON  
[/ brainfeededumag](https://www.facebook.com/brainfeededumag)



October 2022

Volume IX Issue 7

Editor-in-Chief  
Brahmam K V

Executive Editor  
Harish Kakani

Editor-at-Large  
T P Venu

Sub Editors  
Muhammed Fazil  
Tooba Shaikh

Art & Design  
Ravi Sankar P

Circulation  
Hemachander S  
+91 91777 74851

Printed, Published, and Owned by  
Kakani Veera Brahmam

Printed at  
Kala Jyothi Process Pvt. Ltd.  
1-1-60/5, RTC X Roads  
Hyderabad-500 020, Telangana, India

Published from  
8-3-191/565/K, Vengal Rao Nagar  
SR Nagar Post  
Hyderabad-500 038  
Telangana, India  
Contact No.: +91 72070 15151

Email  
info@brainfeedmagazine.com  
brainfeedmagazine@gmail.com  
www.brainfeedmagazine.com  
facebook.com/brainfeededumag  
twitter.com/brainfeededumag  
instagram.com/brainfeededumag  
RNI No. APEG/2013/49994



**A** change maker is someone who takes creative action to solve a social problem. Many have good intentions but translating them into action is what matters. At the core is a heartfelt desire to do good for the community and make the world a better place. There are many who have, by their sheer dint of imagination and determination, brought about a change.

In this issue, we bring you 20 changemakers from across the country. Some threw it all away to give it back to society, a few left their hometowns to serve the needy in the remotest areas and then there are those who were not privileged yet plunged into discomfort zones so that the future generations do not undergo what they had to. Then some have had all the opportunities and the resources to make tons of money in any sector but chose education. Each individual has a story to tell and has contributed in their own way to bring about quality change in the lives of not just students but parents and the whole ecosystem.

There is a lot that is happening in schools on the pedagogy front as there is now a consensus that 'rote learning' has to be relegated to the background. However, the 'child-centred' learning' practices need to percolate to the length and breadth of the country and be adopted in smaller towns and villages. In the area of leadership too, many have taken the path less trodden and come out triumphant.

Brainfeed interviewed two national teacher award winners of 2022 who have been working tirelessly for the betterment of education. Kavita Sanghvi, Principal, Chatrabhuj Narsee Memorial School, Mumbai and Vandana Shahi, Principal, BCM Schools, Ludhiana. The former is a columnist at Brainfeed but is conspicuous by her absence by way of her column in this edition as she has been basking in the glory of her success and needs that much-wanted break. She will be back with her column in the next issue. We have the three-day Brainfeed Conference coming up in New Delhi between November 9-11, 2022. Block your dates. Hoping to see you there!

**Brahmam K V**  
Editor-in-Chief

The

C

hange



**D**riven by the desire to make a difference in education, the men and women featured in these pages have been silently going about their work. Many have left cushy jobs, others their NRI status and even more, their comfort zones to work in hard and inhospitable conditions. All the people we interviewed have an interesting story to tell but one common aspect is the urge to help the learners.

The teaching and learning process is evolving by the day and the use of technology is permeating every sector, even more in the education field but what remains the same is the need to demystify concepts and make the process of learning fun and interesting. Every change maker has added his or her own touch. Some have taken the aid of art to make learning interesting, while others adopted ingenuity to disseminate science and math concepts.

The bane of teaching in India has been 'rote learning' and to combat this, the change makers have come out with innovative ways. The Brainfeed Team comprising Tooba Shaikh, Muhammed Fazil, and Shinjini Malik spoke to the change makers.

# Makers



**Aarati Savur**  
CEO, Parisar Asha, Mumbai



*Aarati Savur is the CEO of Parisar Asha, a Mumbai-based not-for-profit organisation committed to serve the society through a unique learning approach 'ESAL' - 'The Environmental Studies Approach to Learning'.*

# All for the joy of learning

**T**he sight of the happy faces of children and happy families motivated me to join Parisar Asha," says Aarati Savur, the CEO of Parisar Asha - Centre for Educational Research and Training.

She left her flourishing corporate career and joined Parisar Asha as a CEO in 2013 to fulfil the wishes of the founder-director Ms Gloria de Souza, to support schools to provide a joyful 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning system through environment and art.

"Education should provide children with the joy of learning. Parisar Asha has been focusing on that for the past 40 years. We have been working on changing the present education system, which is driven completely by the motivation to get good marks and grades. The present Indian education system installed by the British is just making children mug up facts and figures. It is creating a bunch of slaves, not skilled humans. We are not focused on skill development or building attitude and values. Education should be for life, not only for getting good grades."

Aarati Savur has a master's degree in Botany and an MA in Drawing and Painting. And has a rich experience of 26 years in the field of education and the corporate world. She has brought about numerous positive changes in the organisation and the society at large through various innovative projects, such as Eco-tech World School Program, Free parenting helpline, and workshops for students, teachers, and parents for a sustainable tomorrow.

Children are there in school for less time, so it is at home that they learn more things. So, the parenting helpline conducts parenting workshops irrespective of economic background, providing them with experiential learning.

"Parents are forcing their children to participate in all activities. They want children to excel in everything. Too much expectation from parents can lead to stress and mental issues in children. Children should be free from expectations. Not every school is competent enough to meet the parents' demands. So we will face similar problems until we completely change the present system."

Ms Savur dons many hats in her illustrious career. She has been honoured with many national and international awards. She was also a member of the Experts resource for the Board of NCERT Art and Aesthetics department. She was involved in creating and rolling our teacher's training package on Arts integration for NCERT.

She believes that the present-day teachers are only completing the syllabus since they have additional duties, but they forget the fact that many questions in life are out of the syllabus. They should prepare our children for the challenges in future.

"Educators and parents should work like one team. All things start from the family. Families should strengthen their bonds with children and should be understanding. Families are the reflection of society. For a good society, we need to have strong families where we accept and celebrate differences. Inclusiveness should begin at home."

In the last eight years, the programs headed by her benefited 2 lakh students, 2 lakh families, and 10,000 teachers. ■

Many questions in life are out of the syllabus. Teachers should prepare our children for the challenges in future.

# Man behind Bachpan Schools

## Ajay Gupta

Founder & CEO, Bachpan Play Schools,  
Academic Heights Public Schools; Co-Founder,  
Prismart, Rishihood University, Must & More

**A**jay Gupta is a doting father and can go to any length to get the best for his child. This unconditional love led to the birth of Bachpan School. In the early 2000s, while checking his daughter's pre-school book set, he felt cheated, as there were only one or two books. The idea of starting a playschool chain occurred to him then. This motivated him to research for two years and come up with a playschool.

He developed a curriculum, content, and educational toys and unveiled Bachpan Play School in Delhi in February 2004 by investing ₹ 30,000 from his savings. Today, there are more than 1,100 Bachpan play schools across India. The playschools have also spread to Tier II and Tier III cities. After its success, Ajay has also set up Academic Heights Public School, which has more than 100 franchises.

Not content with just pre-schools, Ajay Gupta co-founded Rishihood University in Sonipat, Haryana, intending to make university education accessible to all. Ajay believes that educators should understand and facilitate students' needs and aspirations to carve out successful individuals.

"It is clear that we educators have many roles to play. Educators are frequently social workers, guardians, and mediators —





but please know that our role as a teacher is to boost the quality of holistic development we give to all our children. We only need to consider our education to understand how impactful educators are on children and other teachers. So, utilize this power and become the strengths of many students,” says Ajay Gupta.

Ajay was born in a business family and grew up watching elders doing business. He has had a polio-related disability since he was nine months old, but that has never come in the way of his passion to make a difference in society. Initially, he was accompanied by a helper to carry him to school, but later, at the age of 13, he started using callipers and crutches.

During his school days, Ajay had an interest in business studies. It marked the beginning of his desire to become a businessman willing to take risks, talk statistics, and maybe change the game. He was involved in the family businesses while pursuing his graduation. By the age of 24, he had already set up a string of successful businesses, including some chit-fund companies and computer education centres.

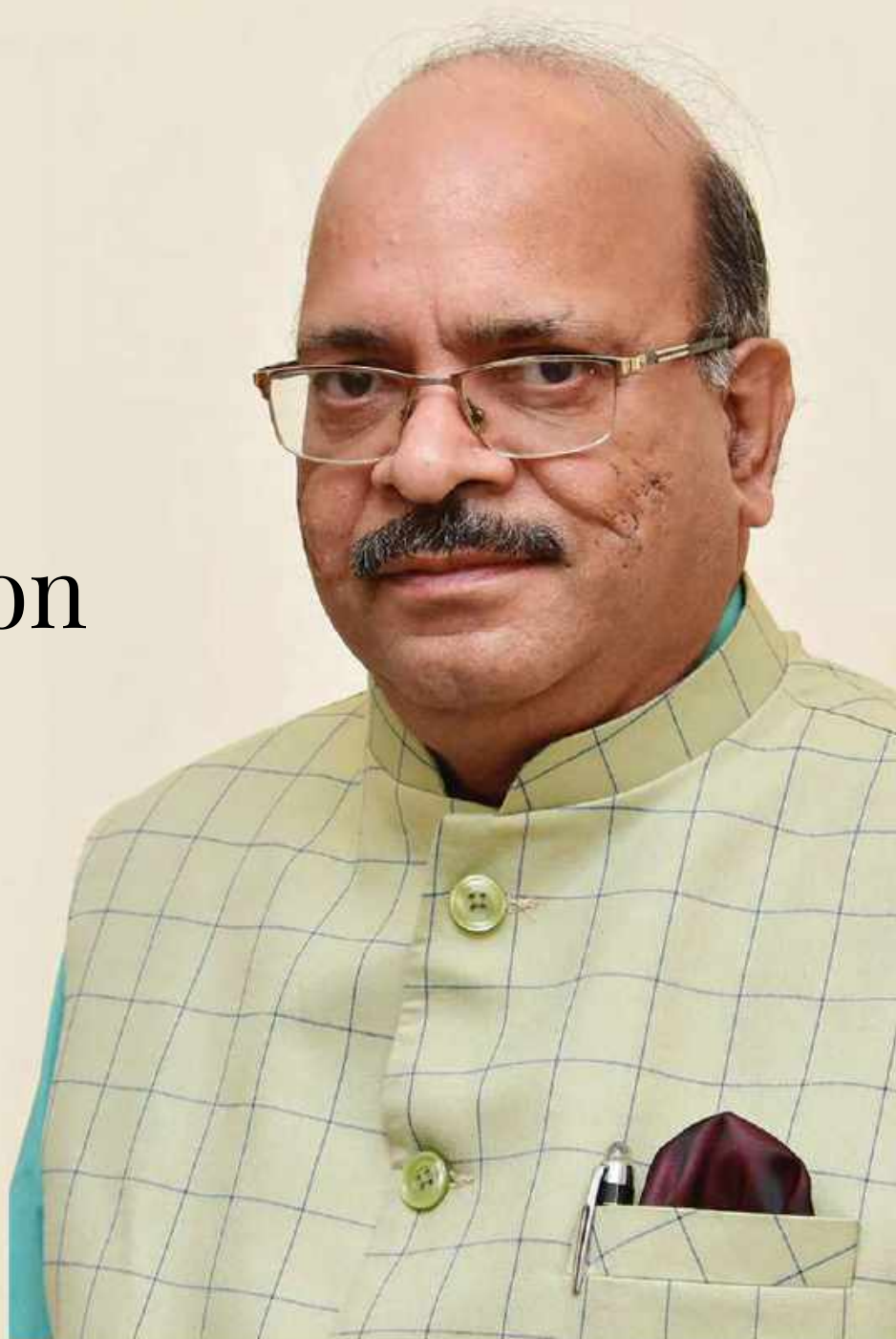
Ajay observed societal educational and awareness gaps from childhood to adolescence. The struggles he encountered as a student inspired him.

About six years ago, Ajay had to switch to a wheelchair since his shoulders had become weak. Using a wheelchair made him realize the challenges faced by people who use it. He set up an NGO called ‘Hum Honge Kamyab’ to empower disabled students and to work towards their education and equal accessibility. Kamyab, he is already. ■

# Adding a *human element* to education

**Anand Prakash  
Sharma**

Principal & Director, Kundan Vidya Mandir  
Ludhiana



*Ideas coupled with a human touch can do wonders and Anand Prakash Sharma, Principal and Director of Academics in Kundan Vidya Mandir, Ludhiana has been at it all through his career that spans over two decades.*

**A**P Sharma has led several schools and always left a legacy if it was to incorporate innovative teaching practices, specialized training programmes or empowering the student community with skills.

When he was with Maheshwari Public School, Jaipur, he started Project Eureka with classes 9, 10, and 11, where he asked the students to come up with one empirical question, the answer to which they found together as a team. This helped students learn about asking the right kind of questions.

He started another brilliant training program for the National Talent Search Exam (NTSE), where the students of class 10 received special training from a retired expert. In fact, the first ten positions in the state-level NTSE for two consecutive years were all held by the students of the school. His students were even selected for Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY). Such was the success that the chief secretary of the Bihar government visited the school to study the methods he employed.

Sharma has been bestowed with several awards of which the most significant is the Exemplary Leadership Award (2018) from President Pranab Mukherjee. Mr Sharma has also worked a lot for women empowerment and was awarded by the Delhi Commission for Women and UNESCO for it. He is initiating a scheme for underprivileged

female students. He also sent students of class 11th for a 15-day internship programs to different hospitals and chartered accountancy firms.

He was included as a member of the 'Niti Aayog' committee for picking projects, 'Atal Tinkering Lab' and a member of several CBSE committees. Mr Sharma contributed substantially to Design Thinking and Early childhood Care education. He is also a parenting expert. He worked with William De Kooning Academy, Netherlands, and MIT, the USA on the inclusion of Design Thinking in education.

Mr Sharma strongly believes in the human touch. On Teachers Day, a nursery student entered his office early in the morning and handed him a chit. Written on it were the words "very good." The child said that on her birthday, Mr Sharma wrote "good" in her diary, and since she thought it was his birthday, she wanted to give him a "very good."

He says, anything a teacher gives to their students, they get back two-fold. He also believes that as an eduleader, it is his job to create more leaders. It is also important to have a human element in education to ensure that schools are producing well-rounded good human beings. ■

# Tinkering for *betterment*

## **Anil Pradhan**

Founder, International Public  
School for Rural Innovation,  
Young Tinker Academy



*Anil Pradhan believes one must tinker with established patterns to innovate. Everyone can be a thinker but what we need are tinkers*

**A**nil Pradhan, 27, was born in 42 Mouza, a locality in a remote village in Cuttack, Orissa. His father sent him to Bhopal for studies. On one of his trips, he realised how the schools in his village lacked basic facilities, and students lacked skills. In January 2017, he established the International Public School for Rural Innovation as a school and a training centre for children in his locality. It began in a small shed with only three students. Now it's a fully fledged school that focuses on experiential and experimental learning. After graduation, he created tinker spaces to provide students with hands-on learning in various fields.

Anil Pradhan completed his Bachelor's in Engineering from the Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology, Burla. Even though his specialisation was Civil Engineering, he used to go to the labs for other specialisations such as electrical and mechanical engineering. In his words, "The world is interdisciplinary, and we should learn as many skills as we can. Innovators and entrepreneurs will be born only in that manner."

Initially, the school was aimed at the children in his village, but later, he realised that the lack of skill education is not only limited to his village. He found that every village school and even the urban schools lacked skill training; to supplement that he established Tinker spaces in many schools and higher education institutes.

"Our system is not providing the students with hands-on learning in any field. So, the Tinker spaces will help the schools to give students practical training in various fields," he says.

Anil Pradhan formally launched the Young Tinker foundation in 2019. On asking why he named the foundation Tinker instead of Thinker, he said, "Everyone can be a thinker but what we need are tinkers, people who are exploring the why behind everything they notice."

The Young Tinker academy was launched in 2015 at 42 Mouza. A branch was established later in Bhubaneswar also. There, Anil provides the students with hands-on

In 2020, a group of students trained by Anil were invited to the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge 2021.

training in various fields like 3D printing, CAD modelling, Arduino programming, Electronics and circuit designing, robotics, and many more.

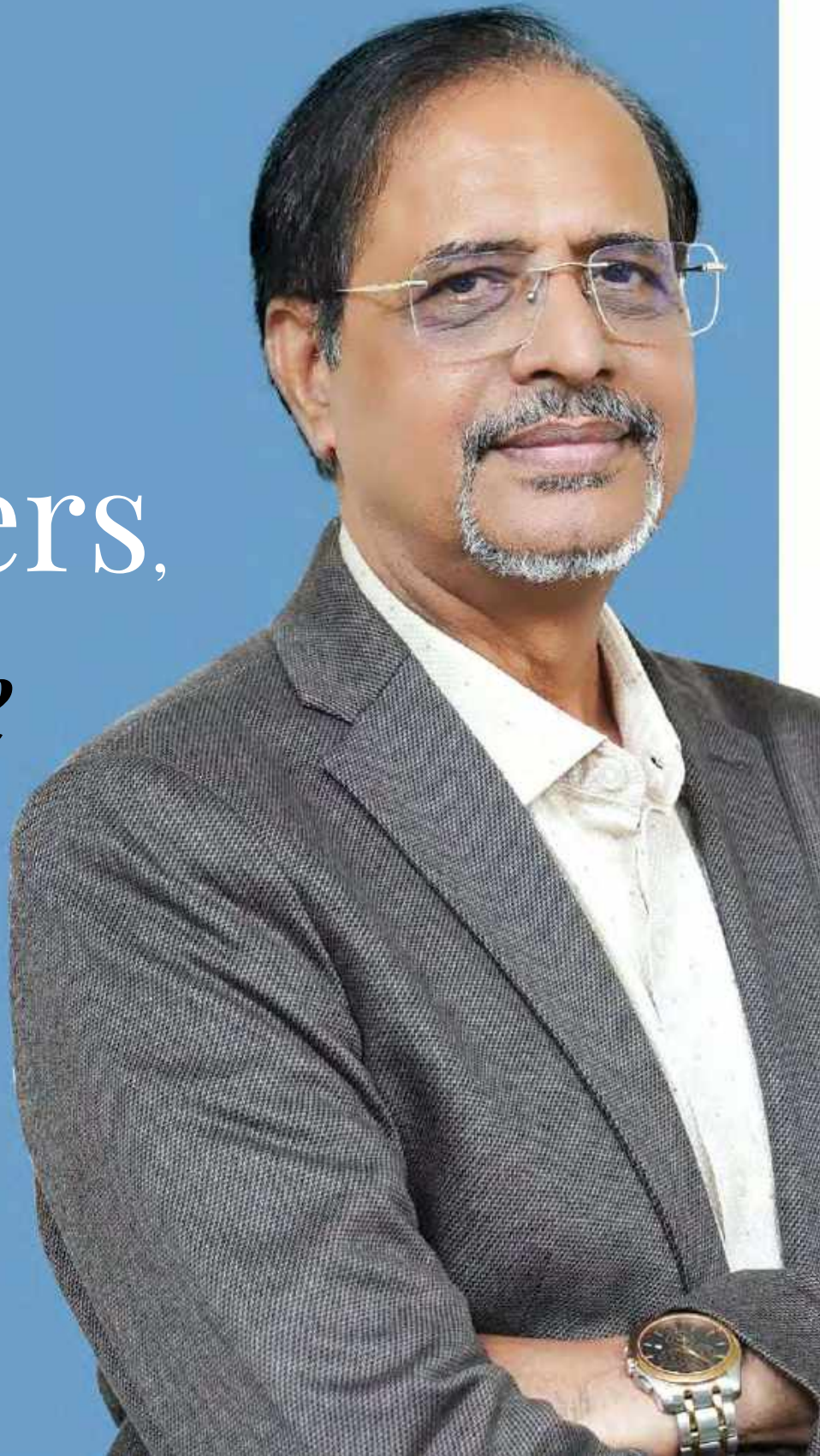
In 2020, a group of students trained by Anil were invited to the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge 2021. They became India's first interdisciplinary U-19 team to participate in the challenge. Since it was during the pandemic, the students were given online training, and they went on to bag the world rank three for their work on a rover.

As Anil says, "Do not be a thinker, be a tinker. We never establish anything by thinking, go on tinkering, innovate, and change the world." ■

To  
teachers,  
with  
*love*

Dr. Ashok  
Kumar  
Pandey

Eminent  
Educationist



**M**any years ago, Ashok Pandey noticed a teacher often used a laptop to teach. Mr Ashok ensured that a projector was installed in the teacher's classroom. This was much before the pandemic. On another occasion, he encouraged a teacher to apply for the Fulbright Scholarship successfully, and at Ahlcon Group of Schools he initiated awards to recognise the efforts of teachers. He says, "Teachers need to be respected and appreciated. Whenever we notice a teacher doing a good job, we announce their name in the assembly. We have constituted several awards such as Best Co-Scholastic Teacher award, Exemplary Contribution award, and Voracious Reader award, to name a few." In short, Mr Ashok's life revolves around teachers and empowering them.

A voracious reader and writer, Mr Ashok egged teachers to read and even suggested titles. Many teachers went on to publish articles in newspapers and authored books. A firm believer in professional development, he ensured the school-sponsored teachers attended workshops and conferences. Many teachers also travelled abroad in exchange programs and also obtained additional degrees.

On leadership, Mr Pandey has been vocal at several forums, he says, "Principals need to be pedagogical leaders and not just administrators." He adds, "While smooth

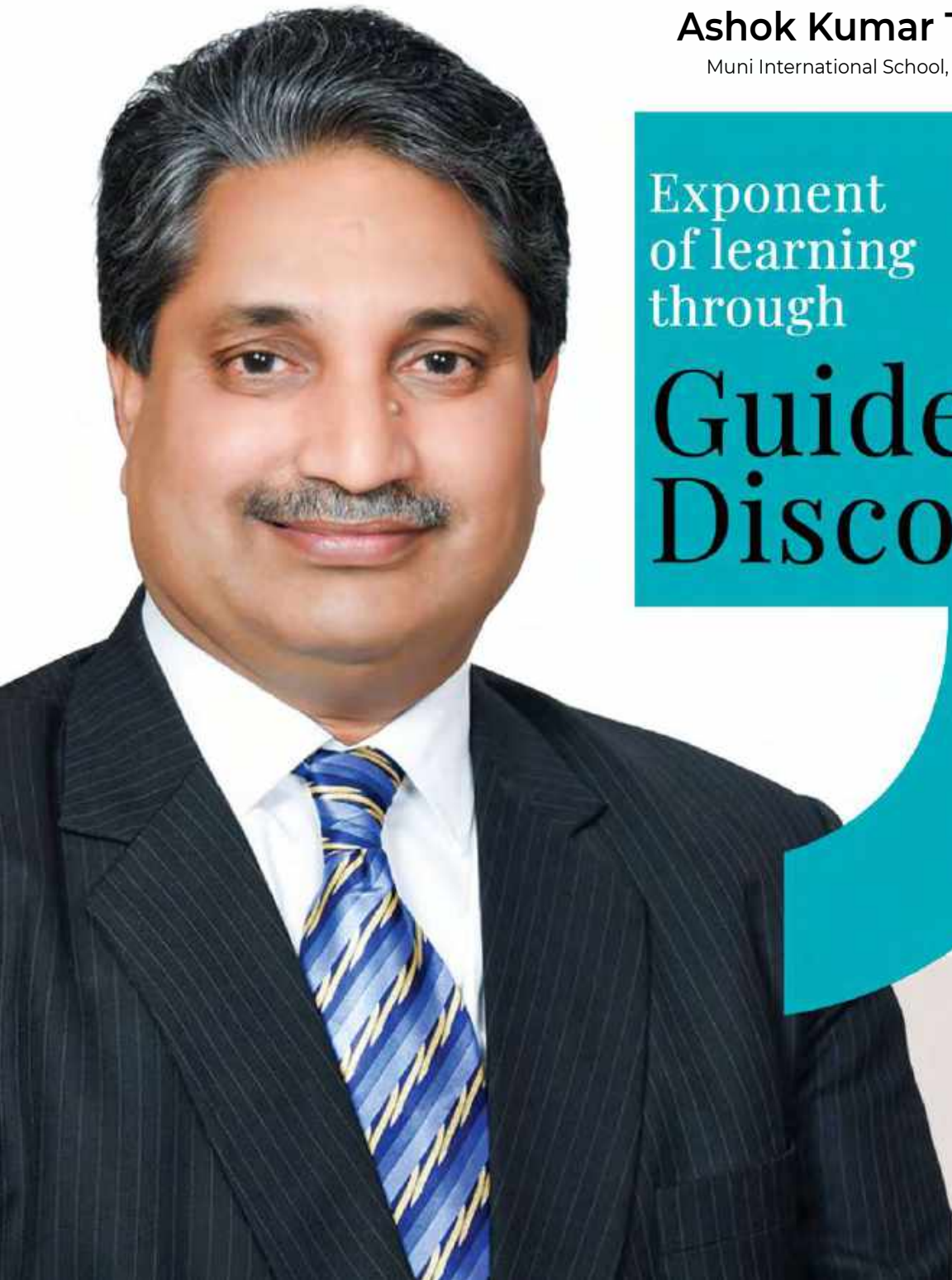
administration is necessary, school leaders need to create an eco-system where learning and teaching blossoms. Every teacher has an innate capacity to be creative, and one needs to trigger it."

There are several examples of teachers who retire in the same position they were hired in. "Every teacher needs to develop personally and professionally and move vertically. Between 2003 and 2013, 12 teachers at Ahlcon International School were assigned senior leadership roles i.e., section heads, academic coordinators and HoDs or moved vertically within the organisation," says Mr Pandey.

The in-house teacher development, INSET (In-Service Education and Training), at Ahlcon International School ensures that teachers undergo five to seven days of in-service training every year. The program gained popularity and has been cited in journals and forums. For Mr Pandey, a teacher is the fulcrum of the school ecosystem. You keep them happy, and they will keep you and the nation happy. He has been instrumental in facilitating crèche facilities available for pre-primary age-group children of the primary school teachers for an hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon.

Mr Ashok is one of the first to facilitate knowledge of computers to teachers. He says, "Learners are digital natives, while teachers are digital migrants who have not yet mastered various available tools or grasped fully how these tools can be leveraged". AIS partnered with Microsoft, a leading technology provider. He also encouraged its teachers to seek certification from the Centre for Teacher Accreditation (CENTA).

When asked how will he like to be remembered? Pat came the reply, "As someone who invested in the development of teachers and the school systems." ■



**Ashok Kumar Thakur**

Muni International School, New Delhi

Exponent  
of learning  
through

**Guided  
Discovery**

*Ashok Kumar Thakur is an ex-serviceman based in Delhi who is the mastermind behind the 'Changemaker School' Muni International School (MIS), where the role of a teacher is de-centralized and reconstitutes the teacher as a motivator and facilitator*

**A**shok Kumar Thakur did not get English education and wanted his children to study in an English medium school, but they did not pick up skills that matter. This was when he decided to do something. A firm believer that a student should be prepared with life skills, he left his secure business to start a school.

Muni International School follows the UPLC system of education, that is, Understand the Problems that Life Creates. The teachers, or rather the gurus of MIS, are mere facilitators of the self-teaching-learning process of the students in the school.

Muni International School adopted the Aiklavaya model of Creation; the Group Reciprocal/Responsibility System (GRS) of peer learning, which de-centralizes teachers' authority and reconstitutes them as motivators and facilitators of learning through 'Guided Discovery'. The Aiklavaya model imagines every student to be a learner and a teacher, not only learning but also creating and sharing knowledge with others.

According to Thakur, the Aiklavaya model of education is a symbol of self-learning. At MIS, they are focused on child-centric education where every student competes with themselves, and teachers become facilitators.

"All successful people are Aiklavayas. Greatness can be achieved only by self-learning. The present educational system of Muni International School is replicating the ancient system of Taxila and Nalanda Universities where learning took the centre stage, not teaching," said him.

"While recruiting and training teachers, we ask them not to teach the students. Everybody can teach. We do not need teachers. What we need are gurus who can help students understand everything. It is the duty of students to learn and understand."

His aim was never to build a chain of schools but to create an example of how a school should be, to inspire others. Thakur's education model is now appreciated globally, owing to its unique curriculum design.

A UNESCO panel for education analyzed and recognized the Aiklavaya model under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4. SDG 4 is "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". This education model is adopted by various schools and school boards in India and across the world.

A UNESCO panel for education analyzed and recognized the Aiklavaya model under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4.





**Dr. Deepak  
Madhok**

Chairman,  
Sunbeam Group  
of Educational  
Institutions

# Civil servant turned *ace edupreneur*

**A**n epitome of dynamic leadership, Dr. Deepak Madhok showed a keen scholastic aptitude throughout his schooling years, which culminated in a Post Graduate degree in Biochemistry from Allahabad University. He subsequently joined the Provincial Civil Services of the state as an Administrative Officer Class I in June 1979. His versatility as an Administrator was ably reflected in his career span of 11 years.

He held the coveted posts of Assistant/Deputy Administrator of the Municipal Corporation, Varanasi, and many other senior administrative posts.

Deu to his sheer love for education and die-hard commitment to doing something bigger and better for society, he resigned from his job in 1990. After he resigned from the civil services, he took over the reins of the Sunbeam Group and since then, by dint of his arduous efforts and immense dedication, has redefined the concept of education in the entire Uttar Pradesh.

Under his able guidance, the Sunbeam Group now comprises seven schools affiliated to the CBSE, two Women's Colleges offering graduate and Post Graduate programs affiliated to the MGKV University, four hostels housing more than 2,500 students, and 17 Associate Schools under the banner of DHK Eduserve Ltd spread across the state of Uttar Pradesh.

He has never believed in resting on his laurels and achievements, instead, he believes that there is always

a scope for improvement and innovation. His one-line philosophy for his school is to make the children happy on the school premises, and learning will follow. Twenty-five thousand happy families imposing their trust on Sunbeam and entrusting their most valued possession to the schools that are under his direct leadership vouch for the fact that even the word "successful" is an understatement. He is extremely well-read and goes all out to satiate his thirst for knowledge.

He inherited his knowledge of education from his parents - Prof. Amrit Lal Ishrat Madhok, who was a doyen of Persian Literature in the B.H.U. and his mother, Mrs D. Ishrat Madhok, who was an educationist par excellence. It was their vision and Dr. Deepak's enterprise that laid the foundation of what is now one of the most prolific educational conglomerates of the state, the Sunbeam Group of Educational Institutions.

He is a philanthropist who runs a free school, Sunbeam Gramin School Karsana, for socially underprivileged students in the rural area, with all possible educational aid. He also has an association with some social organizations viz Banwasi Kanya Ashram, Varanasi Society for Women's Upliftment, Kashi Orphanage, Varanasi Remand Home, Society for Welfare of the Blind, Jago Banaras, Kashi Vikash Manch, etc.

A visionary with a multifaceted personality, always eager to learn and emulate, Dr. Deepak Madhok epitomizes a 21st-century edupreneur – learning, according to him, should always inspire and transform lives. ■

# School dropout turns *saviour*

Gazi Jalaluddin

Founder, Ismail Israfil Free Primary School, Sundarban Sikshayatan Mission, West Bengal



image courtesy: Flickr

***Marred by poverty himself, Gazi Jalaluddin ensured that no other child would have to go through what he did for getting education.***

**G**azi Jalaluddin, born in Thakurchak village of Sundarbans, West Bengal, who is now 72, was forced to drop out of 2nd standard at seven due to poverty. He and his family were forced to live on the streets and beg for survival. After a while, Jalaluddin started pulling rickshaws to make ends meet. As soon as he turned 18, he got his driving license and started driving taxis to support himself and his family. During this trying time, he realised that numerous children have to earn a livelihood at the cost of education, and just like that, he vowed to make sure that no other child would have to go through what he did.

He started his noble efforts by first establishing a driving school of sorts. You must have heard the phrase, "Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day, teach a man fishing, and he'll eat for a lifetime." Jalaluddin put this to practice. He started with ten members and established the Sundarban Driving Samity. He taught these ten members how to drive free of cost. However, there were two conditions. First, all the members, after starting earning, will donate five rupees each month to the Samity. Second, all the members will pay it forward by teaching others in need how to drive. Soon the Samity flourished along with its members.

He asked people to donate land, but no one came forward, and he decided to use his share of the land he inherited from his father to build

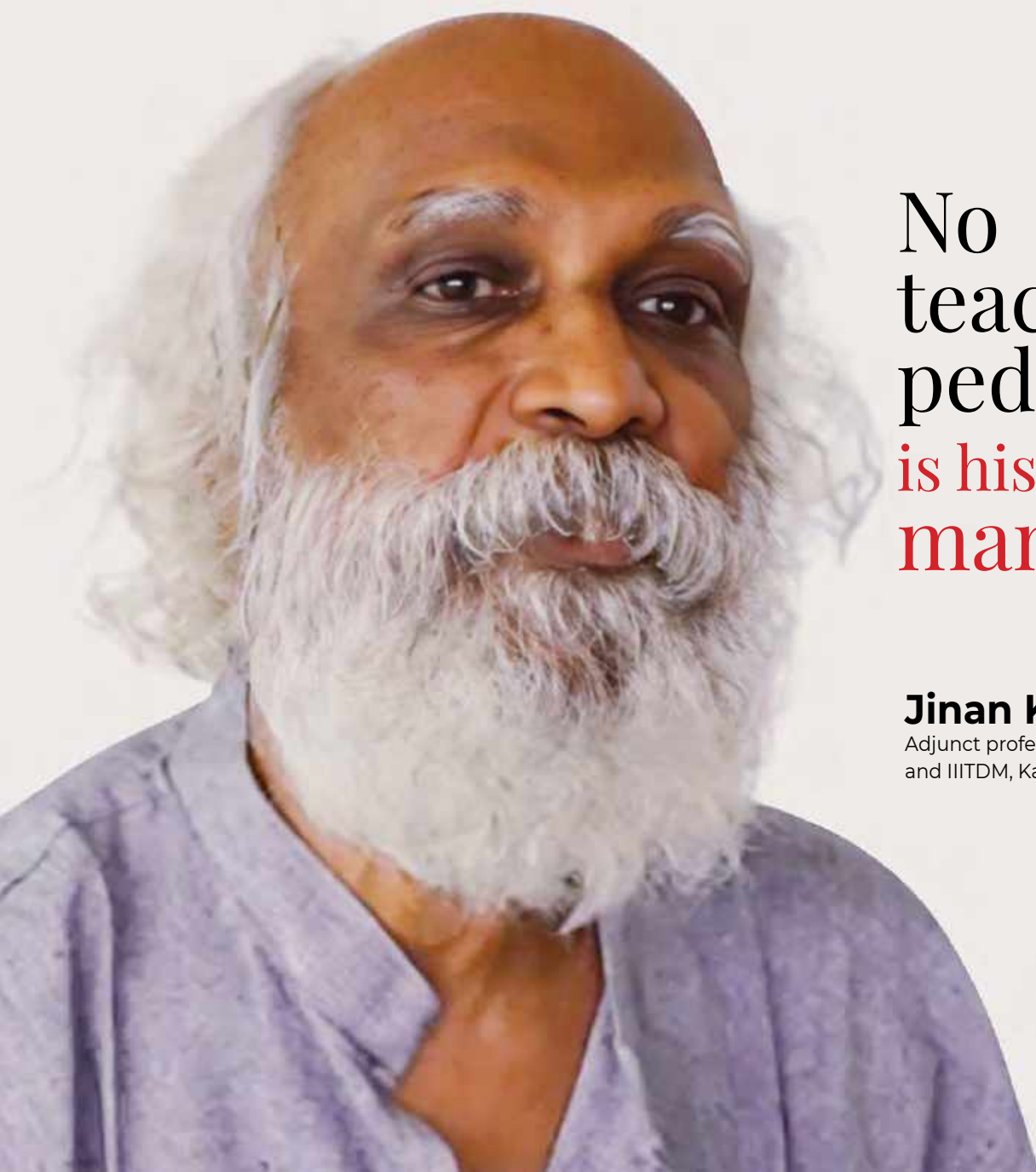
a 2-room building where he started his first school in 1998. With each passing year, the number of students as well as the rooms kept on increasing. In 2006, Ismail Israfil Free Primary School (named after his two sons) had 12 rooms, three bathrooms, and one dining hall where a midday meal was provided free of cost.

There was one problem. Since the school was located in a Muslim ghetto, almost all the children that attended the school were Muslims. Jalaluddin wanted to establish a school open to all children regardless of religion. One of his taxi-passengers donated a piece of land not very far from his first school. There, in 2009, he inaugurated Sundarban Sikshayatan School. Both the schools combined had a total of over 400 children and 70 teachers.

#### **Turning point**

In 2018, he got a chance to appear along with Aamir Khan, the actor, on the game show - Kaun Banega Crorepati and ended up winning ₹25 lakhs. With the funds, Jalaluddin built the Sundarban School and College (AA). AA stands for Aamir and Amitabh.

Today, Jalaluddin runs five schools for underprivileged children. He also plans on opening a college to further support the students of his community. ■



No  
teaching  
pedagogy  
is his  
mantra

**Jinan K B**

Adjunct professor at IIT Bombay,  
and IIITDM, Kanchipuram

*With an unconventional approach,  
Jinan K B is working to make  
learning interesting*

**T**he most important lesson from my experience is that we literates learn the word, but illiterates learn the world. Learning the world is effortless and requires no teaching as learning, like breathing, is a choice-less process. My research on is how children create knowledge autonomously and how schools damage this propensity completely underlines that.” This quote by Jinan sums up his idea on the ‘teaching-learning processes.’

In the third year of engineering, he got expelled from college, which turned out to be a life-changing experience as he spent time in a primary school for a year to get a fresh understanding of what and how education happens. He completed his degree the next year and joined NID. Speaking about his NID days, he says, “For the first time, I met students and teachers who were interested in learning. No one was taking attendance, but everyone was deeply involved in learning. there, I found a true learning space, very different from the teaching spaces that I had experienced till then. The next three years at NID became a fertile ground for deep exploration regarding the learning process, development of aesthetics, the meaning of culture, etc.”

Jinan K B believes that life has equipped us to learn the real world in our respective contexts and has given us the tools, the process and the faculty of understanding. It is through play and the making of toys that children create knowledge. This act of playing retains their creativity and develops intelligence, and they use drawing as a cognitive tool.

“One of the biggest paradoxes of our times is that scientists at the Centre for Brain, Mind, and Machines (MIT) are creating Artificial Intelligence capable of learning autonomously, which is based on their research on how children learn autonomously. Then this very AI is being used to teach children how to analyse second-hand information.”

After NID, he worked with rural artisans and came across real learning which was about the creation of contextual knowledge. He also noticed that despite no teaching, children were learning.

According to him, modern research on children is wrong because it is based on how to teach children and not on how children learn autonomously. ■

According to him,  
modern research on  
children is wrong  
because it is based on  
how to teach children  
and not on how children  
learn autonomously

***Kiran Bir Sethi instills confidence in her students with an education that equips them with an 'I can' attitude.***

Placing academic learning in a real-world context and empowering young minds with an 'I can' mindset are the two ideas on which Kiran Bir Sethi established Riverside school in the year 2001 in Ahmedabad. The realisation that education to a great extent was rewarding the students for their compliance, but not for their conversations compelled her to think of an alternate method. Cut to 2022, central to Kiran's teaching method- a simplified Design Thinking approach is recognised and welcomed not just in India but the world over.

Born and brought up in Bangalore, Kiran Bir Sethi completed her graduation from the National Institute of Design in 1989. She started her career as a designer before stepping into the education field.

At Riverside School, the team led by Kiran Sethi works every day on developing five skills or investments in children that are essential for their development. The team works to enhance the social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual skills of children.

"These five investments are set in the program to help children learn an 'I Can' change attitude and have confidence in their abilities to lead their lives," says Kiran Bir Sethi.

In 2007, aProCh (a Protagonist in every Child), a community-based initiative, was started in

Ahmedabad by Kiran Sethi to create a city that supports child safety, where children have the freedom to explore, derive fun and joy, have different opportunities, and build happy memories. Currently, the initiative is spread across various cities, schools, and NGOs.

Design for Change, the world's largest movement of change - for and by children, was launched in 2009. It uses a simple 4-step design framework – FIDS (Feel, Imagine, Do, Share) to cultivate the 'I Can' mindset in children. Today, Design for Change is spread across over 60 countries impacting around 22 lakh children and 65 thousand teachers.

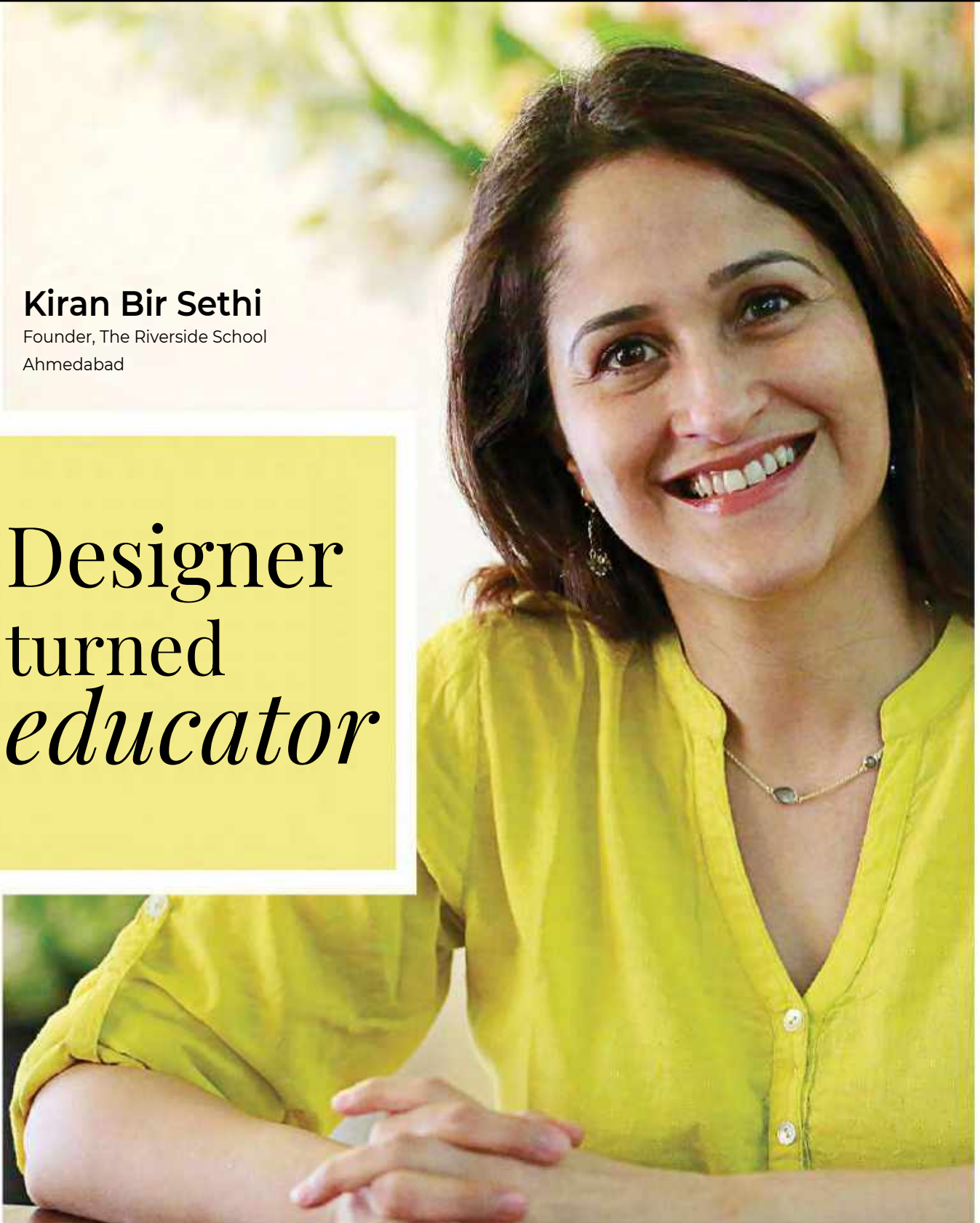
She established the Riverside Learning Centre in 2016, where the practices and approaches in the Riverside school are used. Training programs have been designed for schools to be more user-centric by housing all the practices in 6 pillars, Curriculum, Parent Partnership, Personal and Professional Development, Community, Administration and Leadership.

Kiran, Riverside, and Design for Change have won several awards and recognitions for their innovative approaches to education. The awards include the Light of Freedom Award, the Lexus Design Award, The Earth Prize, the Rockefeller Innovation Award, and The Lego Reimagine Award.

**Kiran Bir Sethi**

Founder, The Riverside School  
Ahmedabad

Designer  
turned  
*educator*





## Lata Vaidyanathan

Director, TERI Prakriti School,  
Gurugram

# Leader with a purpose

**L**ata Vaidyanathan is a Tamilian, but she began her career at Kendra Vidyalaya, Jammu, where she taught PGT classes. She lives in Delhi and frequents Mumbai. She speaks Tamil, Hindi, Marathi, and English. She says, "Learning is not limited to classrooms. It encompasses every aspect of the minute and manifold experiences that enrich our lives."

Ms. Vaidyanathan observe that if learning comes essentially out of life experiences, then shouldn't classroom learning be based on our own experiences of trial and error, and our discoveries of rights and wrongs? Such competency-based learning, the importance of which even the National Education Policy (2020) talks about, needs to happen in every school.

NEP also emphasises education in vernacular language, a move that Ms. Vaidyanathan avers is an important one. The closest thing to a child's heart is their home, and what is language if not home? Moreover, education is not limited to language. Education happens to the mind, and language belongs to the tongue. Furthermore, the learning of languages also happens automatically, it need not be learnt in schools.

On leadership she says, the main role of a leader is to be a role model for every aspect of the school life of a child. 'Chief Learning Officer'

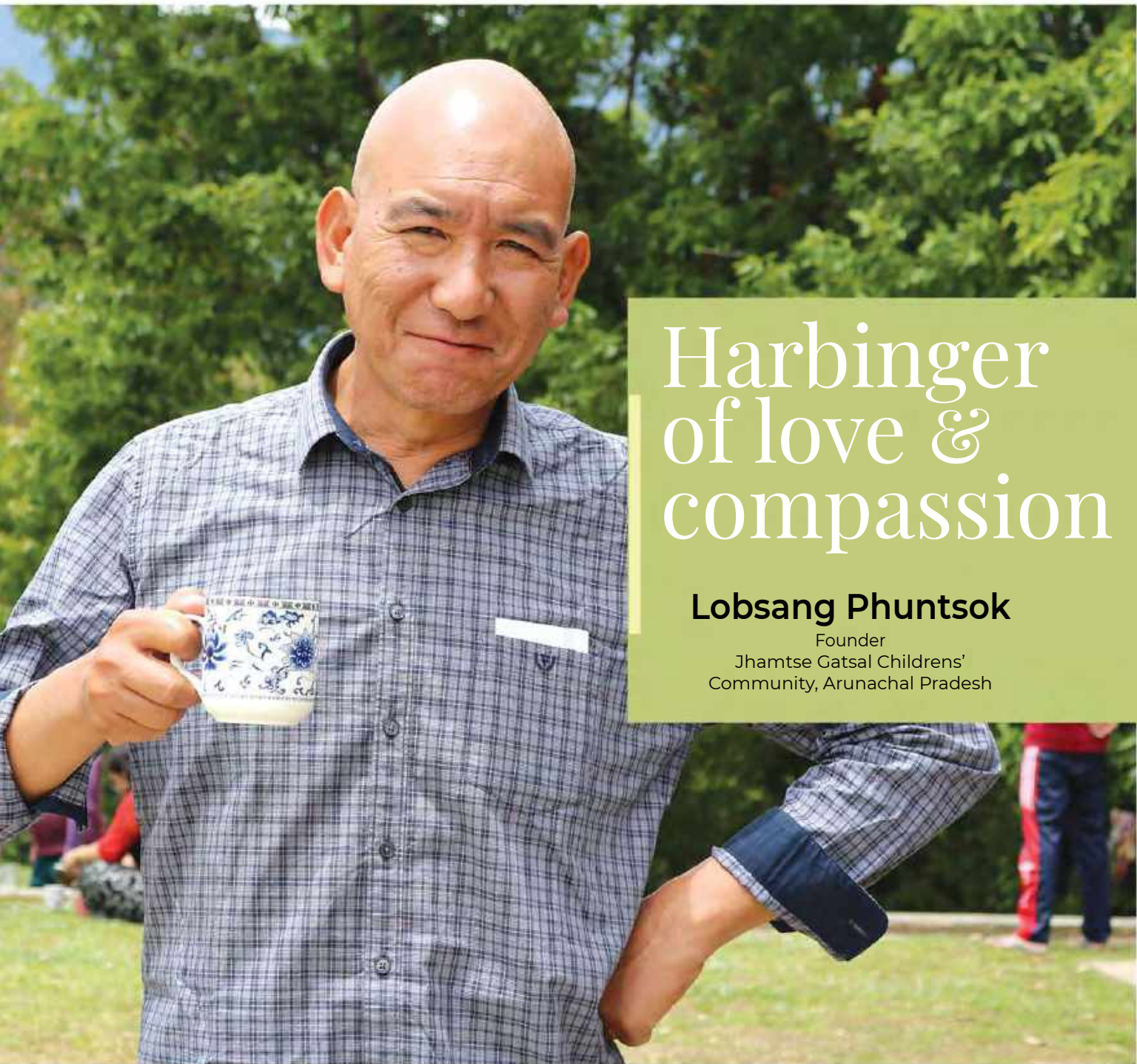
of the school would therefore be a title more apropos for the job, she thinks. "I have learned, and so I want everyone else to learn" should be the attitude of all Eduleaders, as it would help with the cumulative growth of an institution.

She has been associated with Bhavan Vidyalaya in Chandigarh, where she was the principal. She then founded the Eicher School in Parwanoo. She was also the principal of Modern School at Barakhamba road for 14 years. She received the National Award to Teachers in 2003.

"Learning is not limited to classrooms. It encompasses every aspect of the minute and manifold experiences that enrich our lives."

School management only wants to know whether the school has got good results. Her agenda has always been to prepare children for the world and not for exams. That is also why all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are so crucial. Environment education is, for Ms Vaidyanathan, the complete education.

Her school, TERI Prakriti School, puts this principle to practice. It regularly involves students in green programs to help build a more environment-friendly world. ■



# Harbinger of love & compassion

**Lobsang Phuntsok**

Founder  
Jhamtse Gatsal Childrens'  
Community, Arunachal Pradesh

*Jhamtse Gatsal is creating a comprehensive K-12 curriculum and learning ecosystem to educate the heart, mind, and body*

**J**hamtse Gatsal (jhaam'-tsay gah'-tsal) in Tibetan means 'Garden of love and compassion' - the core philosophy on which the Jhamtse Gatsal School functions. Established by Lobsang Phuntsok in 2006, Jhamtse Gatsal is a community, a school, and a home for about 120 children comprising of all age-groups, from toddlers to adolescents from the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

The students admitted to the Jhamtse community have a background of adversity. In the community, these children are provided with better lives, helping them achieve their fullest potential.

Lobsang Phuntsok, who had a troubled childhood, was sent to a Buddhist monastery by his grandparents. Life at the monastery made him a better person with a wider outlook.

Although he had a difficult childhood, he did not want other children to go through the same and Jhamtse Gatsal was born.

"My grandparents sent me to the monastery because they were worried about the person I was becoming and that there would be no one to look after me after they passed away. They believed that monastic life would help me. At the monastery, I found some of the most skilled teachers to support me in my journey of shedding the baggage of my past," says Lobsang.

After the monastic years, he was equipped with special training in teaching Buddhist Philosophy in the West. Lobsang travelled across the US and Europe teaching and giving talks on the universal principles of love and compassion. He worked with educators,

doctors, and mental health professionals to incorporate the fundamental principles of compassionate thought and action into the field of education and the holistic nurturance of children.

"I see education as a space to revive our old practices of collective, multi-generational living and learning because they are essential for our well-being. Our job is not to carve our children into well-crafted, sellable commodities for current market needs but to help them find and harness their unique

Jhamtse Gatsal is featured in the Emmy Award winning short documentary, Tashi and the Monk.

talents and abilities to leave their individual, indelible mark on humanity and make the world a kinder, gentler, and inclusive space for all."

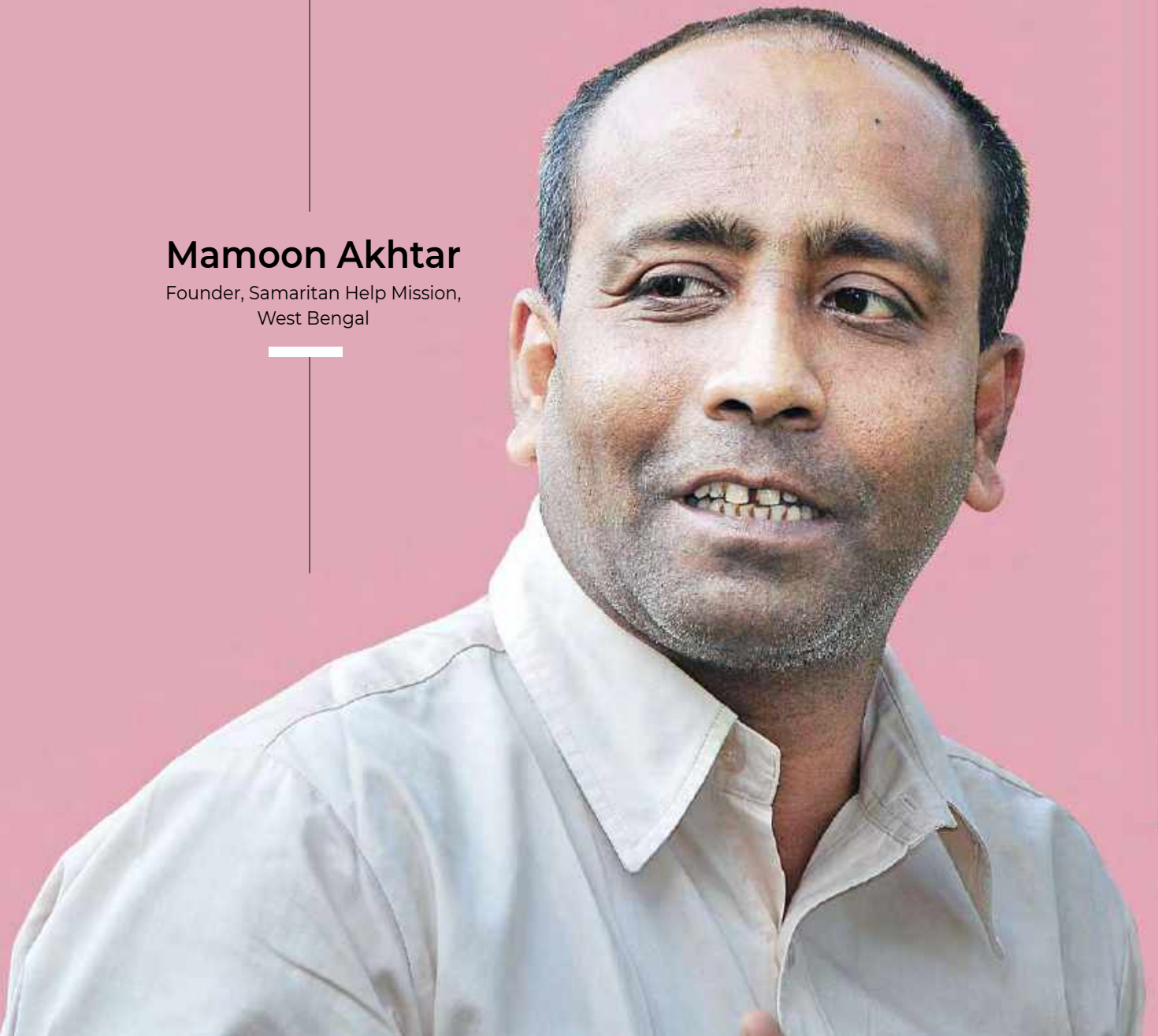
Jhamtse Gatsal is creating a comprehensive K-12 curriculum and learning ecosystem to educate the heart, mind, and body. It is an attempt to integrate Lobsang's training in the ancient and profound wisdom of the Indian educational models with current education and technological trends to prepare the young to meet the volatile, uncertain, complicated and ambiguous demands of the 21st century.

"I envision a new generation of changemakers who don't intend to confront a hostile and unjust world but rather entrusted with the task of building a kinder, more peaceful, and compassionate world for all," says Lobsang Phuntsok. ■

# SMS – One of World's top 10 Inspirational Schools

## **Mamoon Akhtar**

Founder, Samaritan Help Mission,  
West Bengal





Main Akela Hi Chala Tha Jaanib-e-Manzil Magar, Log Saath Aate Gaye Aur Karvaan Badhta Gaya  
Majrooh Sultanpuri



I started towards my destination all alone but, folks kept joining in and the caravan kept on increasing.

This, in a nutshell, is the story of Mamoon Akhtar who started a tuition centre in a 300-sft room with six students in 2001. Today, more than 3,000 students study in Samaritan Mission School (High).

Mamoon Akhtar was forced to drop out of school in class eight as his parents couldn't afford an English education. He continued his studies as a private candidate but only till class 12. His father died and their financial situation worsened. In 2001, he ran into a distraught child whose mother was being forced to sell drugs by a local thug. With the help of the local police, Akhtar was able to help the family. The boy asked for another help. "I want to learn," he said and landed at Akhtar's house along with other kids. This is how Akhtar's journey began.

Akhtar faced difficulties since he was teaching the children in his own tiny one-room home. One day, he noticed a report in a newspaper about Lee Alison Sibley, the wife of the then American consulate, and her philanthropy. He wrote to her seeking a donation which was initially rejected. Later, however, she visited Akhtar and was so moved that she donated ₹ 10,000 and got a story published about his efforts in a national daily which changed his life.

The article was noticed by a prominent philanthropist from Mumbai and Akhtar's dream of a school for underprivileged children finally became a reality. Another impactful moment of his journey was when, while building a boundary to a plot that was donated to Akhtar's organisation, Samaritan Help Mission (SHM), by TATA Group, the owner of the neighbouring plot enquired about their work and impressed, he donated his plot which was to be used to build a mosque. This land was then used to build Samaritan Mission High School (SMS High).

The school has been shortlisted among the "Top 10 Inspirational Schools of the World" for "World's Best School Prizes" in the "Overcoming Adversity" category by T4 Education, a UK-based research organization.

The aim was to provide English education to the underprivileged children of Tikiapara slums. Akhtar started with only six students and today, it has morphed into a government-affiliated higher secondary English medium school with a student pool of 3,009. In future, SHM will replicate the model of SMS (High) in the slums of Bankra in the Howrah district. To uplift the health scenario of the slums of Tikiapara, SHM will establish a low-cost and multispeciality hospital at Tikiapara with general OPD, surgery, radiology, and pathology facilities. ■

*The Kaloex group  
is consistent in  
academic excellence  
and the use of  
technology*

**Dr. Manjula Pooja Shroff**

MD & CEO, Kaloex Group



# Taking education to the next level

**M**anjula Pooja Shroff is the CEO of Kalorex group, one of the most impactful education groups in the country. The road, however, was not easy as she rebelled against her family because they wanted to get her married at a very young age and she succeeded after battling the norm that a girl child should never be given higher education.

She realized the power that education can bring. The edupreneur in her was born out of her innate desire to make a difference in society. Her journey in the education field started in 1996 by establishing the first Delhi Public School in the western zone of India under the aegis of DPS Society – the Delhi Public School, Bopal, Ahmedabad.

Over the years, the Kalorex Group has expanded in all areas of education – living up to its commitment, ensuring that students in any economic sphere or having any specific needs get educational opportunities. Hence, apart from the various K-12 CBSE, IB, and State Board schools which operate under the Kalorex umbrella, there is Prerna, a school for students with Learning Difficulties, Visamo, a home for underprivileged children, from where students go to the best schools for their K-12 education and VEDIC, a vocational and skill building institute, where less privileged girls are taught skills to be able to sustain themselves and make a living.

Lately, looking at the impact that Covid had on education, Dr Shroff had the vision to offer extra

classes and resources for students who needed help during the lockdown by launching a Digital Learning platform – eKal Academy. This platform is now successfully offering live and self-paced classes for academic subjects and skill-based courses for learners of various age groups. Yali Adventure Series is another offering to engage young learners through animation and fun. These ventures speak highly of her inherent nature to serve every section of society.

Over the years, the Kalorex Group has expanded in all areas of education – living up to its commitment, ensuring that students in any economic sphere or having any specific needs get educational opportunities.

The sailing has not always been smooth. But over the past two decades, Kalorex Group has managed to stay a step ahead on every front in the education space. Be it academic excellence, use of technology in education, ensuring professional development programmes for teachers and always being connected to stakeholders.

Dr Shroff believes that the holistic approach will finally get the best results. She makes it a point to personally invest her time to create and launch relevant modules and programmes through her Shroffism website, where she aspires to bring all her staff and parents to higher levels of conscious living. ■



**P. Purnachandra Rao**

Founder, NICE School, Mynampadu, Guntur Dist. AP

# NICE school thoughts

*It is a school for orphans,  
and all are treated equally, irrespective of  
their caste,  
religion, race or economic background*

“**F**irst things first. The school has never received government aid and does not intend to seek government help. The school has been and will be run with the help of people,” said Purnachandra Rao, 54, founder of Needy Illiterate Children Education (NICE) School. A man who has seen poverty and come up the hard way, he established the school for orphans in 2002 with CBSE affiliation. Education and basic amenities are provided to the students free of cost and expenses are covered by donations from benevolent individuals.

Born in a poor family in a remote village in Andhra Pradesh, Purnachandra Rao lost his father when he was just four. His mother, a daily wage worker, strived hard to raise him. Soon after completing his degree, he worked for various companies, including a pharma company for 12 years and in an NGO for five years. In 2001, he sold his ancestral house and established NICE for needy children.

He is now focusing on providing free education to children from tribal communities, who are educationally and economically backwards. He says that even when the country is celebrating its 75th year of Independence, developments are yet to reach them. When asked how he manages funds, he said, “Good work is always appreciated.”

He has connected with more than 125,000 individuals in the past 20 years for donations.

“I have travelled across the country and seen the poor economic conditions prevailing in many villages. My long-time goal is to help as many children as I can by establishing schools like this in various places. I am content with whatever I have and happy that I am making the future bright for numerous children.”

The NICE school admits 40 children every year. Currently, 200 students are studying in NICE and a majority of them are from rural districts of Andhra Pradesh and a few from Telangana. Most of the alumni of the NICE school are now in reputed positions working as software engineers' working for top companies and in several sectors. Gopal Krishna a student of NICE is a chartered accountant.

The school also supports the higher education of their students with the ways and means for the same. Purnachandra Rao is commemorating the 20th year of his school and is planning to establish a care home for the old-age people along with the orphans so that both groups can enjoy each others' companionship. ■

# Making RTE meaningful

**Samina Bano**

Founder & CEO,  
RightWalk Foundation, Lucknow



*Samina's intervention in the RTE in Uttar Pradesh impacted and mainstreamed over 470,000 marginalized children*

**H**ailing from humble family background, Samina understood the importance of quality education and its long-term impact on people at a young age. Determined to make education accessible to children from weaker socio-economic backgrounds, Samina studied the RTE Act in-depth. The Act mandates that private non-aided schools should reserve 25% of the total strength of their entry classes for children from economically weaker sections (EWS) and disadvantaged groups (DG).

Despite having 6.5 lakh seats available under the RTE Act every year in one lakh private schools in Uttar Pradesh, the state recorded abysmally low admissions in the schools under the policy, and she wanted to do something about it.

Samina and her team at RightWalk foundation digitalized the application process for admissions under RTE. A technology-enabled RTE process was developed, designed, and executed by Samina and her team ending discrepancies and irregularities in the admission process resulting in impacting and mainstreaming over 470,000 marginalized children across 75 districts and 16,000 schools within seven years in Uttar Pradesh.

The number of enrolments under RTE seats in private schools increased from just 54 admissions in 2014 to 4,200 admissions in 2015, and it has been recording an upward movement since.

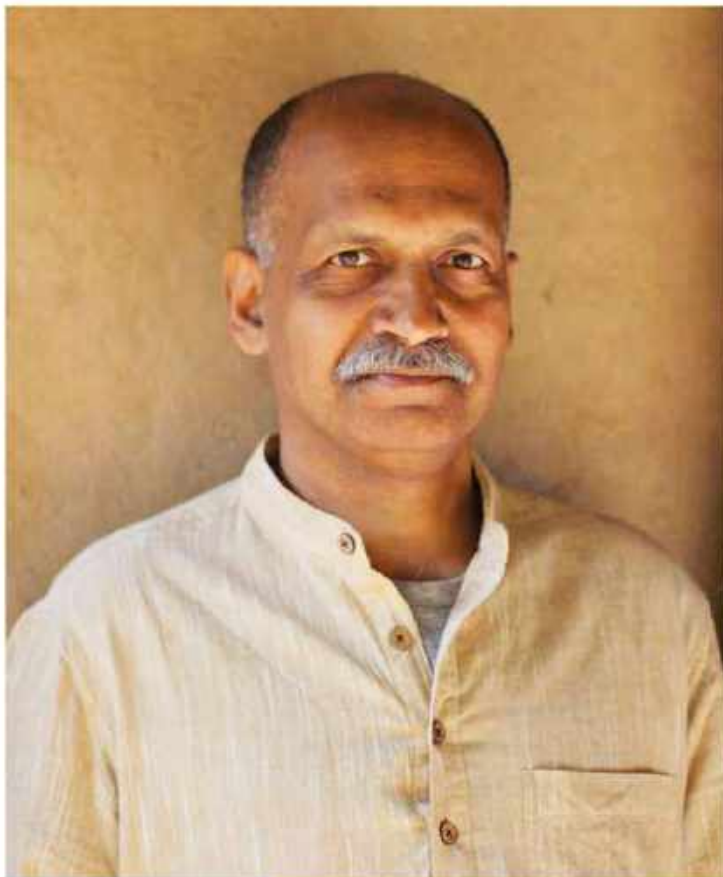
Samina has an engineering degree in Computer Science and MBA from IIM-Bangalore. She worked as a consultant in the US, India, and Singapore. She left her lucrative job in the US in 2013 and has been actively working in the Development and Policy space since then.

In 2020, Samina designed another program to activate the Apprenticeship Act 1961 in Uttar Pradesh to address the problem of unemployment among the youth and rapidly developed a skilled workforce by combining studies with skill training. The program is running successfully with over 250,000 students and more than 7500 establishments registered on NAPS.

Recipient of the Women Transforming India Awards by Niti Aayog, Samina has many accolades to her name. She has previously advised the former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh on policies and education-related matters.

“Communities should always be at the core of our interventions. It is important that their requirements, needs, and aspirations are kept in mind while designing solutions. Policy making should be a two-way process providing scope for the incorporation of the underprivileged ones. Communities' perspective is important throughout the policy development process to understand the problems to be solved,” says Samina Bano. ■

# Harnessing *i*nventive ways of *l*earning



**Sarit Sharma and  
Sandhya Gupta**

Founders, Aavishkaar- Center for  
Science, Arts & Technology



*With the creation of Aavishkaar, Sandhya and Sarit have reinvented the purpose of teaching mathematics and science.*

How many parents who returned from the US of A admit their child to a government school? Not many you would say, but Sarit Sharma and Sandhya Gupta did just that as they believed that it was in sarkari schools that the child gets to play the most and learn fearlessly. Although they had no connection with Kandbari, seven km from Palampur in Himachal Pradesh, they established Avishkaar - Center for Science, Arts & Technology as they wanted to stay in a cold place as they were used to the US climate.

After admitting their child, they would make frequent visits to the school and realize that the teaching of Math and Science was much to be desired. The couple also visited more schools in the state and realized that science and math are the primary vehicles of learning and decided to simplify.

Currently, Aavishkaar is working in association with Teach for India across the nation. Aavishkaar trains Teach for India fellows in teaching Science and Mathematics. They are also working with some government schools in Assam. The upcoming plan for Aavishkaar is an association with the Punjab government to implement their method of teaching Science and Mathematics in the state board of Punjab.

Avishkaar is also associated with the Tibetan Government. Their system of teaching mathematics is now being used by many

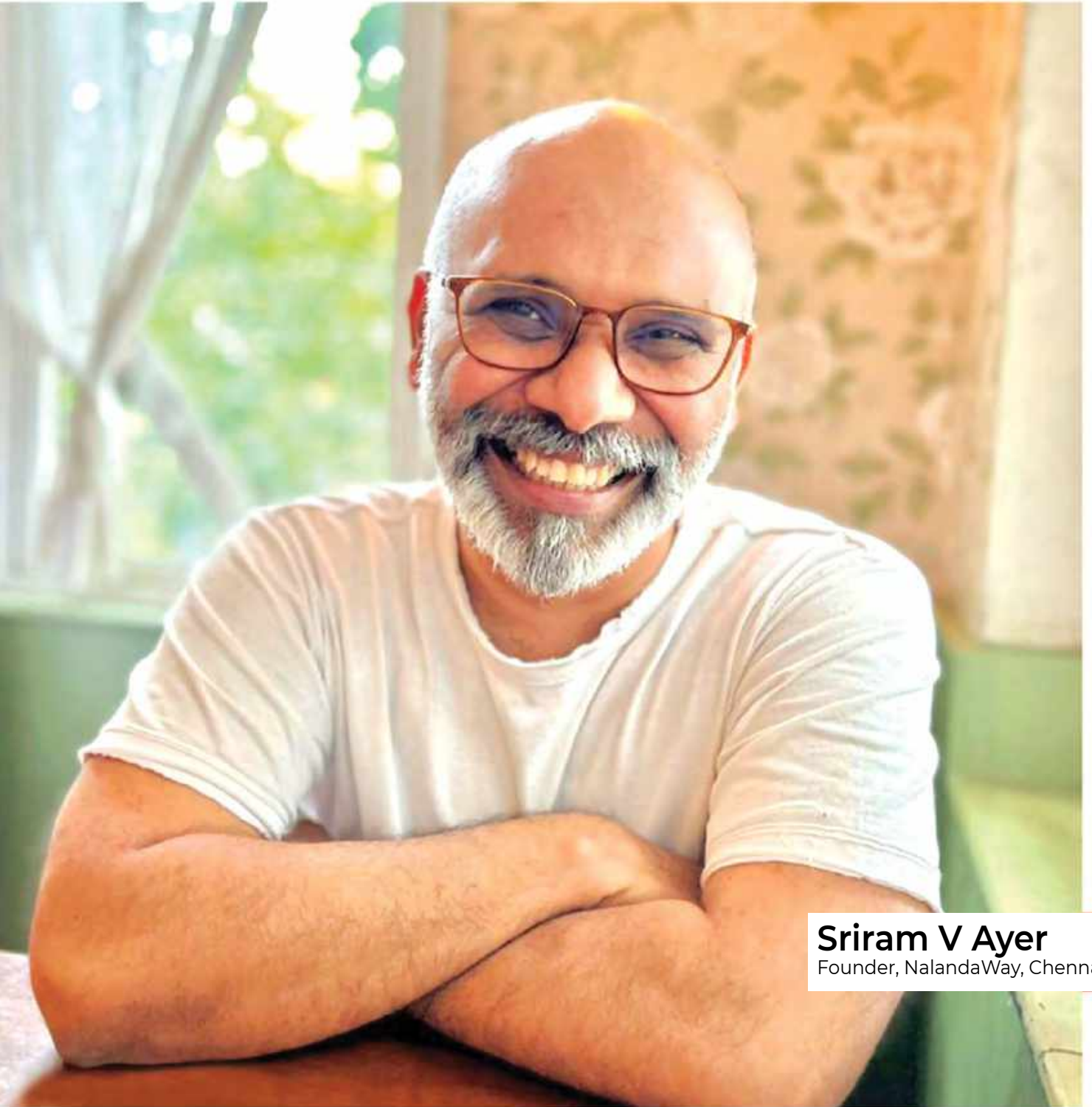
schools under the Tibetan government. "The present education system is about remembering things. At Aavishkaar, students are made to understand things. For example, the present schools teach what multiplication is and what division is. But they do not teach why they are done or how they are done," says the founders of Aavishkaar.

"India is a great place to experiment with innovations in education. Being a changemaker, you are also a decision-maker. There will be successes and failures, but all of those are yours. And most importantly, you will get to work with

We work with other changemakers and together try and bring about changes in conventional education.

other changemakers, and together we can bring about changes in conventional education," says Sarit Sharma.

"The way of teaching Mathematics and Science in our conventional education system is wrong. It just makes children memorize things but not understand things. We are not here as a parallel education system or after-school tuition center. We are working on changing the education system so that students understand the concepts," says Sarit Sharma and Sandhya Gupta, founders of Aavishkaar: Center for Science, Arts & Technology. ■



**Sriram V Ayer**  
Founder, NalandaWay, Chennai

A chance meeting with a boy Vinod who was selling incense sticks for a living got Sriram V Ayer thinking. It was also a time when the Gujarat riots happened and a sense of sombre engulfed the air. Sriram had a cushy job but there was something that was eating into him. He decided to do his bit and that is how NalandaWay was born in the year 2003.

His past experience proved that for most children, the teaching-learning experience had been lacklustre and boring. Teachers dispensed facts monotonously, and were, for the most part, rude and inconsiderate. Moreover, they felt like they had no incentive to learn and educate themselves.

Ayer wanted his foundation to tackle this inherent disinterest in children toward education. He wanted to build a foundation that reignites the passion for learning in children and he found it in arts. Hence, he decided that Nalandaway would incorporate ATA – Achieving Through Arts. It teaches students art forms like photography, theatre, creative writing, dance, storytelling, music, films, etc. The importance of arts, that NEP talks about in 2020, Ayer anticipated decades prior.

His vision was a success and Nalandaway, today, has touched the lives of over ten million

students from lower income groups and victims of disasters, violence, HIV, child labour and human trafficking across Tamil Nadu, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi, and Bihar. The impact of Ayer's efforts can already be seen today. Vinod, who was Ayer's initial muse for this behemoth task, is currently gainfully employed at a firm in Chennai.

Ayer has received countless awards from notable institutions for his

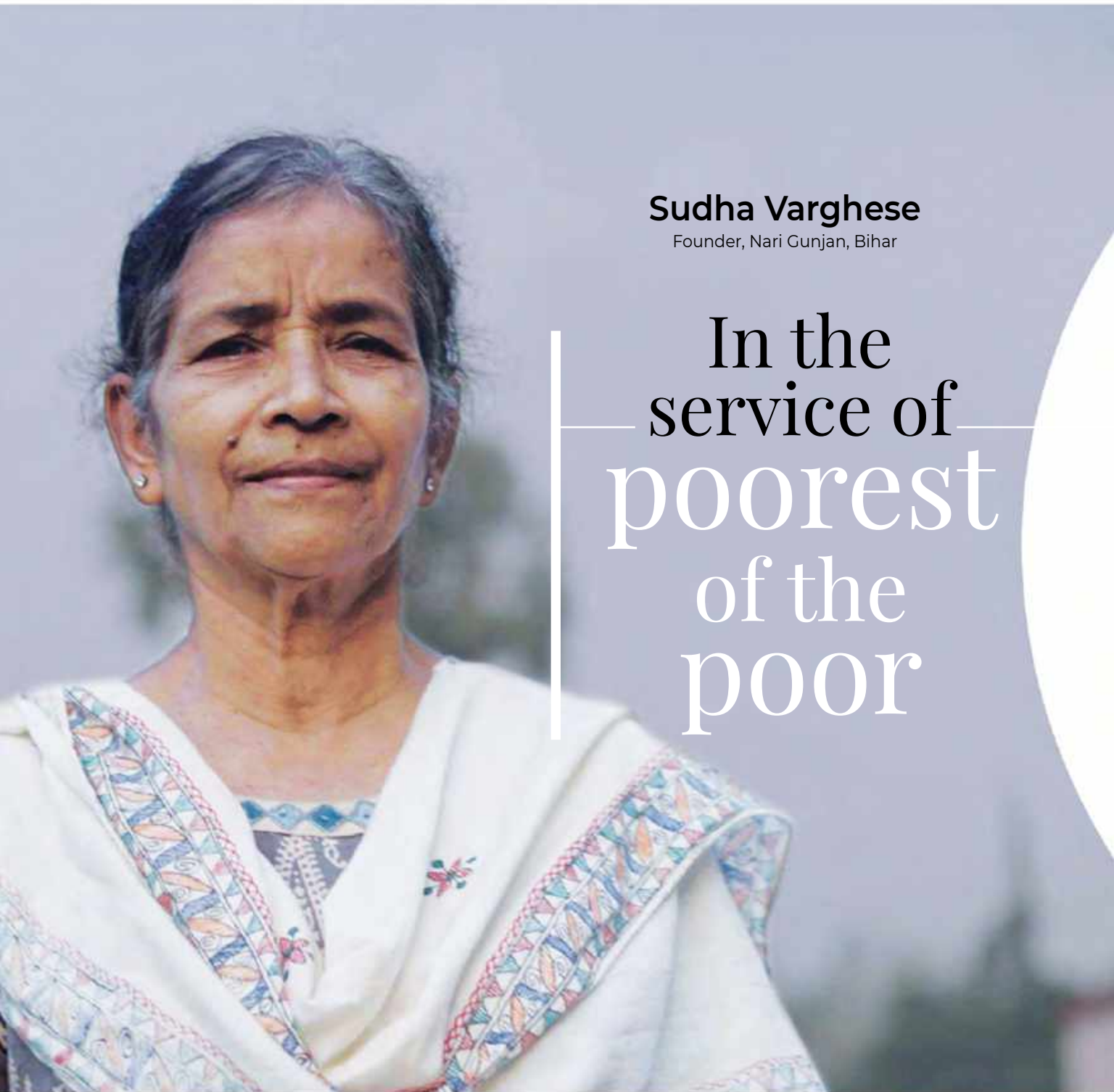
He wanted to build a foundation that reignites the passion for learning in children and he found it in arts.

endeavours. He was a recipient of the Development Marketplace award by the World Bank, the Architect of the Future award by Waldzell Institute, Vienna, and the Millenium Award for Innovation in Education by USAID and FICCI. He is also an Ashoka Fellow and he was named by Outlook Business as one of the top 50 Social Entrepreneurs. He has also penned a critically acclaimed book called "The Story of a Suicide."

# Arts

## as a vehicle for

# learning



**Sudha Varghese**

Founder, Nari Gunjan, Bihar

In the  
service of  
poorest  
of the  
poor

***Sudha Varghese has been relentlessly working with the poorest community of mouse catchers and uplifting their lives. She is also the CEO of Nari Gunjan, a non profit organisation***

The year was 1965; Sudha Varghese from Kottayam in Kerala was different from the others in many ways. With a bent of mind to serve the needy, she had to fight resistance from her family to join a religious order at Notre Dame Academy and became a catholic nun to help the needy. The journey from the palm-fringed Kerala to the dusty plains of Bihar was not just long but hardy. The Musahar community, who are mouse catchers, are among the poorest of the poor, and education is their last priority.

Sister Sudha Varghese, 73, is also popularly called Cycle Didi, a sobriquet that came along as she travelled long distances by bicycle after realising that walking took a toll on her body. She shares, "At first, I used to walk several kilometres to meet people to understand their problems. Walking through the heat made me weak. Some days, I used to doze off because of the tiredness. Hence, I bought a bicycle to travel all around. At that time, not a single lady used

to ride bicycles, and seeing me on a bicycle amused the villagers, and they started addressing me as cycle didi." Sister Sudha soon came to be known as Cycle Didi.

Over the years, she has established 60 centres for students and an organisation, Naari Gunjan, to empower women who belong to the lowest castes in Bihar. When she noticed that the infants from low castes were being denied entry into the anganwadis, she established the 'Anand Shiksha Kendra' (Joyful Learning Centre) for them.

The boys in the community were attracted to drugs as they did not do anything constructive. She provided them with cricket kits, and today, they are winning every local tournament.

UNESCO noticed her work and provided her with financial aid for three years. The Government of India, recognising her work, bestowed her with Padma Shri in 2006. ■

# Dedicated to early childhood education

*Early childhood education and Dr. Swati Popat Vats cannot be separated. She has been championing the cause for a systematic way of teaching and believes in keeping the child at the centre of education.*



**Dr. Swati Popat Vats**

President, Podar Education Network  
Early Childhood Association

**M**any view early childhood education as merely an initiation into or a stepping stone towards being an educator for K-12 or higher education institutions. Such a move from early childhood education to K-12 or higher education is often deemed akin to getting a promotion. However, Dr. Swati Popat Vats, for whom early childhood education has always been her true passion, this couldn't be farther from the truth. Despite having a PhD, she chose to stay in early childhood education as she felt that she could make a difference here.

She developed her own philosophy of early childhood education that she terms "Kiducation". Kiducation brings the child to the centre of the teaching-learning process so that each decision made by teachers or educators has the child at the centre of it. It is education from the point of view of, neither parents nor the teachers, but of the child. With this particular philosophy, she managed to transform the way early childhood education is perceived.

To drive home the importance of the child in the teaching-learning process, she always keeps an empty chair in the meetings she conducts. That empty chair belongs to the child and so, is not empty at all. It is a reminder to everyone in her meetings that whatever decisions they take, will impact the child, and so, their needs come first.

Even the NEP (2020) stresses the importance of early childhood education. It says that 80 per cent of human brain development happens in the first six years. This fact alone indicates how impactful early childhood education is. While we have a plethora of educational boards for primary, secondary, and higher education, there is no such regulatory body for early childhood education.

Firstly, the curriculum prepared in the absence of a board remains unsanctioned by the appropriate authority. This means that the syllabus that is prepared, since it is not reviewed by experts, is aimed solely at completion rather than comprehension. It does not matter whether the child has understood what they are being taught, what matters is that the syllabus is completed. A curriculum, on the other hand, is much more developmentally appropriate. It looks at the child's age, knowledge, and comprehension skills. For instance, the IB and the

Cambridge, both have an early years' program. Thus, schools opting for either of these curricula are in the know about the comprehension level of the child, and they are aware of the quality of education that is to be delivered to the child.

If international boards understand the importance of consistently monitoring the education of children, then so should Indian boards. We ought to have a similar kind of structure where we guide the schools to monitor the quality of education given to children in their early years.

Apart from being a leader in early childhood education, Dr. Vats is also an author who writes educational books for children. Her recent book 'Ms Pencil and her Team' received much praise. Many readers expressed their ignorance about a lot of things discussed in the book. They didn't follow the research and so they

80 per cent of human brain development happens in the first six years. This fact alone indicates how impactful early childhood education is.

were unaware of the problems of jumping straight to cursive when the child is only reading the print script. Teaching children of that age to write in cursive is like putting the cart before the horse. This book by Dr. Vats deserves all the praise it gets and more and needs to be read by everyone since it helps educators and parents understand that writing is just as much a science as an art. More importantly, it needs to be introduced to children gradually in a step-by-step manner.

Dr. Vats is currently co-authoring a book on numeracy. Even the NEP stresses its significance. Everyone in the country understands the importance of literacy, but few understand numeracy. More than just writing down numbers, numeracy is the holistic comprehension of what each number means and signifies. A child may be able to write the number '5', but when it comes to counting, they may still get confused. Hence, having a proper understanding of numeracy becomes important and that is where Dr. Vats's future project comes into the picture. ■



*A survey with 27 progressive schools in India was undertaken to bring out various aspects of innovation and its related practices carried out in their schools*



**PADMINI VEDULA**  
Sr. G.M - Strategy & Quality  
TATA ClassEdge



**SANJAY RADHAKRISHNAN**  
Chief - Strategy & Business Excellence  
TATA ClassEdge



# nnovation framework for schools

**T**he lockdown had thrust upon schools, the need to innovate and respond to alternate methods to keep up the learning-teaching process and conduct various administrative tasks including communication with multiple stakeholders.

To understand this further, research with the leaders of 27 progressive schools in India was undertaken to bring out various aspects of innovation and its related practices being carried out in their schools.

#### Findings: -

- 100% of the schools surveyed, had deployed innovative practices only during Covid
- Majority of the schools could see the immediate benefits of innovative practices which they had deployed

The pandemic presented certain opportunities for innovation. Shifts in three important aspects have been observed:

1) Areas of innovation: Significant innovations in school management have occurred. 59% of the innovations were related to academic administration, 48% to performance management, and 22% to stakeholder management.

2) Innovation as a tool for pandemic response: Of the surveyed schools, 67% felt that technology is inevitable and we should embrace innovation in school education to survive tough times. Moreover, 100%, meaning all the schools surveyed, said that they have now adopted innovative methods in some form or another.

3) Long-lasting impact of innovation: That innovations have a long-lasting impact was felt by around 85% of the schools surveyed.

#### Importance of Innovative Framework

1. The survey indicates that the innovation agenda in a school ecosystem is built on the foundation of its leadership and vision, which could be strengthened through its four critical pillars – curriculum and pedagogy, teacher development, digital infrastructure, and engagement of key stakeholders with technology as an overall point of integration.

#### Curriculum and pedagogy:

11% of the surveyed schools implemented extra-curricular activities to improve physical and mental health and were vocal about their efforts. These activities were linked to outcomes like creative learning in children.

## 2. Teacher development:

There were two major factors that saw a shift. The first is a pedagogical adaptation since teachers were forced to innovate during the pandemic as the traditional methods did not translate to the online medium. The second is the temporal recalibration for teaching and non-teaching activities. According to the survey, while 100% of teachers had to make big shifts, only 20% to 30% of schools hosted training programs to upskill their teachers.

Moreover, the pandemic has deeply impacted the professional development of teachers. Key shifts in the last 12 months include

- increased emphasis on teachers' upskilling,
- rise in online courses (MOOC), individual research, attending conferences, and propriety leveraging seminars by edtech vendors,
- reconfiguring the curriculum to incorporate creativity and innovation,
- increased competitive pricing in online courses,
- increased popularity of subject-knowledge development, classroom management skills, social and emotional learning strategies, well-being and professional development. A recent study by NAU (Apr & Oct 21) said that 15% of all learning sessions offered by NAU focused on digital skills.

## 3. Digital infrastructure:

This includes the presence and use of any of the following in a school: projectors, interactive whiteboards, huge screens, specialized customised software for learning and networking, speakers, mics, laptops, assistive listening devices, etc.

Digital classrooms are more effective than their traditional counterparts since students find them more attractive. A sturdy digital infrastructure is also useful for educators for managing time-consuming administrative tasks like fee collection, inventory, teacher attendance, patrol, transport, stakeholder management, etc., with ease and affordability.

70% of the surveyed schools already had some exposure to digital infrastructure and were therefore able to transition from offline to online mode more easily.

## 4. Engagement of stakeholders:

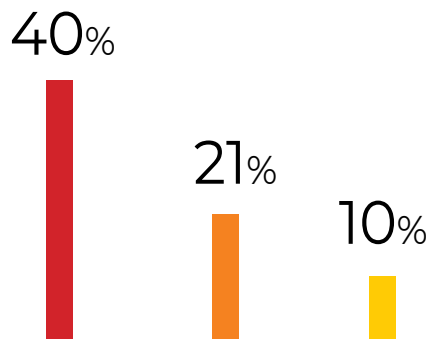
There are two levels to this. First is the engagement of stakeholders like students, teachers, parents, promoters,

top management, etc. Then comes the relationship with policy-makers and allied partnerships like edtech and technology partners for schools.

70% of the surveyed schools said they received the management's support in taking quick decisions regarding matters like online teaching and its methodologies, fee collection, teacher development initiatives, re-opening of the schools, etc. Many schools also undertook various engagement activities and trainings keeping in mind the wellness requirements of teachers and students.

Edtech platforms proved useful in tasks like fee collection and its digitization, interaction with parents, homework assignments, online examination, attendance, creative lesson plans and videos, and in teaching teachers how to run online platforms.

### Deployment of Innovative Management Framework



- schools witnessed an improvement in learning outcomes of students
- schools observed an increase in stakeholder management including parents
- schools saw improvement in attendance and fee collection

For a seamless deployment of the Innovation Management Framework, three components are critical: -

### Deployment of Innovative Management Framework

According to the survey, 40% of the schools witnessed an improvement in learning outcomes of students and 21% of the schools observed an increase in stakeholder management including parents. 10% of the schools saw improvement in attendance and fee collection. For a

seamless deployment of the Innovation Management Framework, three components are critical: -

**a. Leadership system:** The process begins by designing a long-term vision for the school and then establishing an open and transparent communication system with stakeholders within and outside the school. It is also important to look for opportunities to encourage teachers and students to improve their capabilities, support innovative endeavours, and create a robust reward system.

**b. Strengthening the enablers of innovation:** There are 4 enablers of innovation that need to be strengthened: -

- Clearly defined and well-rounded processes: Optimising functional and strategic processes by implementing a robust review mechanism can help drive innovation in the long run.
- Systems' approach: The approach of the schools must be mindful of limiting factors like lack of intervention and support, size of the school, etc.
- Capability development: Building teachers' capabilities is important and the following steps could help: -
  - Planned training interventions
  - Introduction to various customisable and replaceable tools
  - Suggesting best practices for strengthening existing knowledge
  - Impactful recognition mechanism
  - Defining accountability owners and responsibility matrix
  - Identifying relevant capability metrics
  - Appreciating and encouraging intelligent failures
  - Studying the outcomes of school's functional and strategic processes in education.
- Continuous improvement: Schools could also implement activities like Quality Circles and Small Continuous Improvement Projects (SCIP).

**c. Tracking mechanism for innovation:** Some of the key recommendations for successful innovation management: -

1. The culture of innovation is to be necessarily led from the top



2. Due importance to processes must be given and a robust review mechanism with a set of good measures is important

3. As Innovation Management System is fairly a new adoption at the schools, a few milestones become extremely critical, like, the creation of a roadmap, generating ideas and executing them through SCIPs, evaluation of innovation efforts, etc.

4. Creating an environment to build overall capabilities for innovation in the teachers and the school leaders

### Conclusion

Key success factors, according to school leaders, include:

- Constant learning
- Cooperation from teachers
- Clear approach
- Support from management
- Teamwork by all stakeholders
- Critical thinking
- Teacher training
- Planning
- Ideas from edtech partners
- Implementation and adaptation

The deployment of a strong Innovation Management Framework, by schools can help them make significant and permanent strides in their journey toward academic excellence. Innovative practices which were deployed during the lockdown can be retained even after schools have re-opened with modifications that are relevant to the situation instead of allowing the hard-earned advantages to wither away. ■

# Teachers *extraordinaire*

*Brainfeed spoke to two recipients of the National Award to Teachers, Ms Kavita Sanghvi from Maharashtra and Vandana Shahi from Punjab.*

The National Award to Teachers, instituted in 1958, is given every year by the Ministry of Education, Union Government of India to recognize exceptional work. Since the mid-1960s, the award ceremony is held on the 5th of September every year to commemorate the birthday of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

This year, a total of 46 teachers from across the country received this prestigious award and it was presented to them by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu.



“ My approach towards education has always been experiential-based learning

**Kavita Sanghvi**, Principal  
Chatrabhuj Narsee Memorial School, Mumbai

**Q. What does teaching mean to you?**

A. For me, teaching is the opportunity to learn from, and share the learning with others.

**Q. Has teaching taken a backseat being a principal?**

A. My role is more academic now than before since our school has an administrator. Since becoming a principal, I have designed my own curriculum for STEM implementation across the school. Hence, as a principal, I got the opportunity to spread my influence to every classroom.

**Q. In your teaching journey, how have you attempted to make education more inclusive for children whose needs and capabilities are different?**

A. My approach towards education has always been experiential-based learning. When you learn through working and experimenting, the concepts are ingrained in you. So it is not rote learning anymore because the learning has already happened along the way. So everybody has been taken care of. I also ensure that we have a VAST (Visual Analytics for Students and Teachers) model of teaching. So when we create blueprints, we make sure that we cater

to students with diverse learning styles like visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, etc.

**Q. What are some of your milestone achievements and contributions to the profession?**

A. My contributions have mainly been towards STEM learning. I have noticed that fewer girls are pursuing STEM careers and I wanted to remove this gender divide. So, I have created a STEM-based curriculum for classes first to seventh where all the concepts taught in class are connected to real life. For example, students clean their utensils and in the process, learn what sort of cleaning agent is required if the base is oily. Thus, they apply scientific concepts to daily life and that's how the concepts become clearer.

Thus, I have ensured that more students take up science in future because they realise that it is a part of their daily lives. The learning is also inter-disciplinary. When draping a piece of fabric, you look at what kind of fabric you are wearing and why you are wearing it. You're looking at its geography, history, science, and even mathematics. So everything is interdisciplinary.



**I believe in learning and unlearning, for my teachers, as well as my students**

### **Dr. Vandana Shahi**

Principal  
BCM Schools, Ludhiana

#### **Q. What does teaching mean to you?**

A. Teaching for me is my passion. It is my love and my pride. Besides, teaching is dubbed as a 'noble' profession which is a source of pride for me. You can take any other profession, be it doctor, lawyer, engineer, or CA, all of them have had some good teachers in their lives, and that's what I always aspired to be.

#### **Q. Does being a principal hamper other activities?**

A. My role has definitely changed, even though I don't have much direct contact with the students, I get to influence them indirectly through my teachers. Since I design what and how the students are to be taught, I get to influence a larger number of students. Earlier, I was teaching maybe 200 students but currently, all 41,000 students are indirectly influenced by me. So even though my impact is not direct, it has definitely grown. I believe in learning and unlearning, for my teachers, as well as my students, so that the process of educating oneself continues in the right way.

#### **Q. In your teaching journey, how have you attempted to make education more inclusive for children who have different learning and grasping capabilities?**

A. Inclusivity is a diverse concept. It is not limited merely to physical disabilities but involves any kind of difficulty due to which children are left behind. It can be because of learning disabilities, it may also be because of personal and familial problems, or it may be because of other socio-political reasons like caste, creed, religion, gender, etc. We are therefore adopting inclusive practices in which – of course, the physical infrastructure is just as important – we influence the mindset of all stakeholders, whether

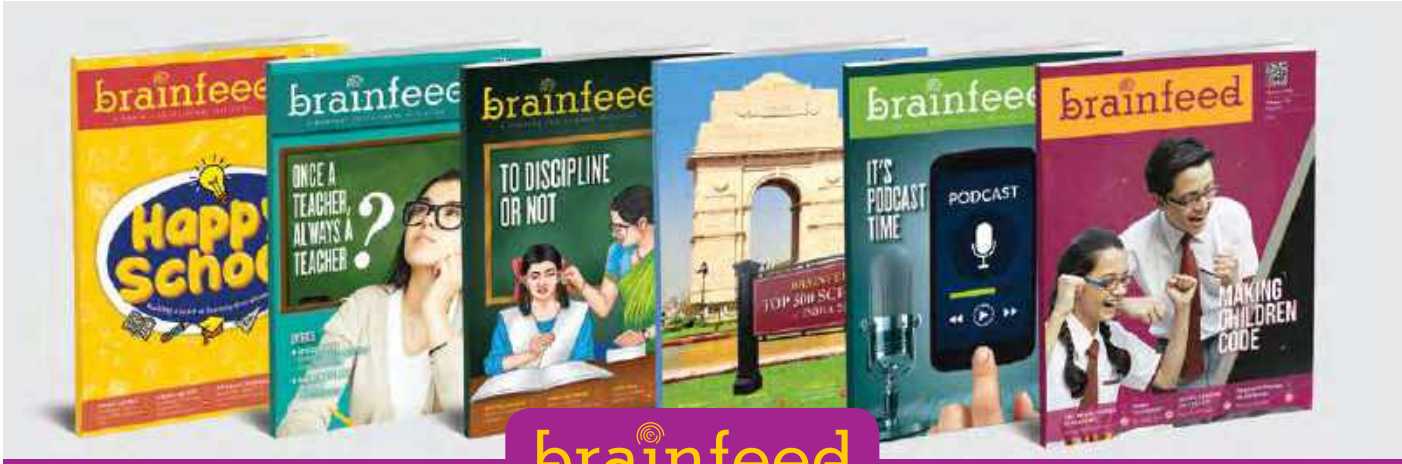


they are parents, teachers, or students. This, I believe is very important.

Secondly, speaking of learning disabilities that everyone already knows is extremely common in India; we have a program called the REACH (Remedial Education Approach for Children) program. Here, our assessment is not merely an output just to label the child, rather, it is a critical input for us that lets us know where the child is and what their position is.

#### **Q. What are some of your contributions to the profession?**

A. I would say that we have been taking small but smart steps in the right direction. The most important thing is that you cannot ignore any aspect of the school. You have to take into account everything, from building the capacity of your teachers to fostering a healthy and inclusive learning culture. The most important aspect, which to me is at the heart of everything, is leading the teaching-learning process, pedagogy and its methodologies, introducing teachers to various innovative methodologies and making sure that it reaches the classrooms. Creating a culture of innovation in the school is also extremely important because that is where children come into their own. ■



**Subscription Form**

Name : .....

Address : .....

.....

.....

.....Pin:.....

Mobile No. : .....

Email : .....

Name of the Institution: .....

.....

YEARS	ISSUES	ACTUAL AMOUNT	PAY ONLY
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	12	₹900	₹800
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	24	₹1800	₹1600
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	36	₹2700	₹2300

Note: If you want to get the magazine by courier add ₹1800/- per year.  
 Kindly draw the DD/Cheque in favour of  
 "Kakani Edu Media Pvt. Ltd." payable at Hyderabad

Cheque/DD No: ..... Date of Issue: .....

Amount: ..... Bank & Branch: .....

A/C Name : Kakani Edu Media Pvt Ltd  
 A/C No : 919020016813781  
 Bank Name & Branch : Axis Bank, Botanical Garden Branch, Kondapur, Hyderabad  
 IFSC Code : UTIB0004159

Date: ..... Signature: .....

For online subscription: [www.brainfeedmagazine.com/subscribe/](http://www.brainfeedmagazine.com/subscribe/)

Address:  
 Plot No: 47, Golden Tulip Estates, Rd No: 4 A, Kondapur, Hyderabad, Telangana-500084  
 Ph: +91 917774851, +91 72070 15151  
 email: brainfeedmagazine@gmail.com, info@brainfeedmagazine.com



Scan for more info

[www.brainfeedmagazine.com](http://www.brainfeedmagazine.com)  
[www.highereducationplus.com](http://www.highereducationplus.com)

# METROLABS

Lab Furniture | Fume Hood | Laminar Airflow | Storage Cupboard

We are there when you need us!

## We Design, Manufacture Supply and Install School Laboratory Furniture

for CBSE, International, IB, ICSE, PU College, Matriculation etc.



Composite Lab

Physics Lab

Chemistry Lab

Biology Lab

Maths Lab

Language Lab

Computer Science  
and Multimedia Lab

The best  
Laboratory Furniture  
Manufacturer  
for Schools



98409 31231 / 97910 33312

Chennai | Bangalore | Hyderabad | Visakhapatnam | Bhubaneswar

Pune | Kolkata | Delhi

metrolabs1@gmail.com

www.metrolabs.biz

[www.kennedymagnet.com](http://www.kennedymagnet.com)



**A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO BECOME ACHIEVERS**



- ▶ Holistic Approach
- ▶ Qualified & Experienced Faculty
- ▶ Safe & Hygienic Premises
- ▶ Handwriting Improvement & Personality Development Sessions
- ▶ Special Focus on IQ, EQ & SQ

**Admissions Open  
2022-2023  
Nursery - Grade X**

**Enroll Now**

 # 14 & 22, BEHIND METRO CASH & CARRY MALL, MYTHRI NAGAR, KUKATPALLY, HYDERABAD

 +91-97055 66466 / +91-97055 66488

 [contact@kennedymagnet.com](mailto:contact@kennedymagnet.com)