

Hello  
Spring!

# THE PINE CHRONICLE

News, Views and Creative Expressions

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## EDITORIAL

The term Eurocentrism may be understood as a worldview that is centered on using the western yardstick for looking at almost everything. It essentially looks at the world through a set of lenses that colours everything with a particular bias. Probably, the first use of the term may be traced to the late 1970s, though the establishment of eurocentricity as the dominant thought process for the entire world was set in motion ever since the beginning of colonialism. By the 1990s eurocentrism as a concept gained universal attention especially in the context of decolonization and the emergence of a new world order. Since decolonization could have led to the total rejection of the western world view and by extension western control over the newly independent nations, concepts such as the Commonwealth of Nations were introduced to ensure that eurocentricity was clothed in a respectable garb and thus avoid outright rejection. In hindsight, it is now apparent that the former colonial masters did actually succeed in determining the content and direction of most of the newly decolonized and independent countries, be it in Asia, Africa or Latin America. Without a doubt, European dominance in World politics was built on its very real achievements in terms of science and technology, its commercial clout, the establishment of a colonial empire and the industrial revolution and later its dominant position in the globalised world order. Interestingly, the coming together of Europe and America especially during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War gave Eurocentricity a new outlook and thrust. Hereafter, the Eurocentric world view included the American component by default. Eurocentricity was now replaced by the Western world view and that most of the international organizations be it the UN Security Council to the World Bank and the IMF were dominated by the Western nations. This ensured the absolute reach and control of the west over the rest of the world and giving it legitimacy. As a matter of fact, the concept of Eurocentrism has been a key feature of most development studies. Writers like Brohman have powerfully argued that it has helped perpetuate intellectual dependence on a restricted group of prestigious Western academic institutions that determine the subject matter and methods of research. This is evidenced by the standards adopted to rank academic institutions internationally, the composition of peer review groups for both institutional ranking, journal ranking and the need to publish and find acceptance in the western academic world in order to establish the credentials of acceptability and fame. There has been attempts to challenge this trend but the domination of the western world in setting the standards, be it in creating the dominant development model or in developing the algorithm to judge intellectual pursuits or academic standards,

resembles a stranglehold! Here, one is reminded of an experiment conducted in the 1940s by psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark called "the doll tests". In this experiment children were given four identical dolls but with different skin colour. They were asked to choose a doll and later asked to explain their choice. Most of the children chose the fair doll and associated positive descriptions to the white dolls. This same trend may find extrapolation in academics when people report that it is easier to publish joint papers when one of or of the co-authors have western names and/or have affiliations to western institutions. Similar is the importance attached by institutions to receive accreditation from the west and proclaiming each accreditation as a crown and some proudly boasting their achievement of a triple crown! Writers such as Andre Gunder Frank have attacked Eurocentrism for the inherent bias of the western world and the west trained scholars for their unsaid belief that non-western scholars and academics lack scholarship and do not have any notable contributions in higher education as compared with the West. The tragedy is that most of the non-western world too has started believing this dictum and seek validation and acceptance of their ideas from the western world. This is not to suggest that questioning the western bias equals to a rejection of their achievements. While accepting their rigour and scientific temper, it is important to establish the primacy of academics and as Arnold Toynbee remarked that though western capitalism encapsulated the world and achieved a political unity based on its economy, it would be a mistake to try and westernize every other country and their thought processes. The western world view was severely impaired as it was essentially a self-centered approach that viewed the non-western countries as being stagnant. Moreover, viewing history as a linear process is severely limiting but also gives grossly erroneous conclusions. Linear progression would proclaim the modern world as the pinnacle of human development and the western standards as the gold standards worthy of emulation. Nothing could be further from the truth!

## ABOUT NUKSA

Nuksa The Pine Chronicle is the monthly news magazine of IIM Shillong.

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## TIMELINE

### Attempting NIRVANA!

IIM Shillong saw the celebration of its annual cultural fest, NIRVANA 2021, to bring together the talents across the country in various events ranging from music, dance and theatrics, from 12th March 2021 to 14th March 2021. The theme for this year's event was 'Hues of Euphoria' to bring along everyone and put up their colors of happiness.

The fest was a three-day-long event, wherein the first two days saw events like *Antaragini* (Solo singing competition), Stereo Heads (Group Singing Competition), *Ankahi* (Slam Poetry Competition – English and Hindi), *Breakfree* (Solo Dance Competition), Mridang (Group Dance Competition), and *Pehel* (Monologue Competition). Nirvana saw participation from all over the country, including various renowned institutes such as SIBM, NMIMS, IIM L, CHRIST, JSPM, NIT K, MIT, IIM T, IIM R, with a total registration of more than 300 participants.

Day 2 was followed by a stand-up performance by the famous comedian Gaurav Kapoor which left all the spectators in splits. The final night of the fest saw an engaging musical night with the famous singer and composer Arjun Kanungo, who, along with his rhythmic skills, also interacted and chatted with all the participants. The entire event was hosted by the participants of IIM Shillong, including Kumari Harshita, Hrishikesh Wagle, Mayank Ghezta, Suraj Gulati, Rounak Ganguly, and Divyaraj Chandwaskar.

The judges for the events were Mr. Merlvin Jude Mukhim, Prof. Chacko Jacob, Ms. Swati Pandey, Ms. Anushree Bhatt, and Mr. Bhargava Tekumalla. The winners of the various events were as follows:

*Antaragini (Solo Singing Competition):* Winner – Savnee Savarkar (NMIMS, Mumbai), 1st Runner Up – Vijay Balaji (SIBM Pune)

*Stereo Heads (Group Singing Competition):* Winner – Team Dhvani (Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies, DU), 1st Runner Up – Team Red Hot Silly Peppers (IIM Shillong)

*Ankahi (Slam Poetry Competition – English):* Winner – Divyaraj Chandwaskar (IIM Shillong), 1st Runner Up – Tania Solanki (IIM Shillong)

*Ankahi (Slam Poetry Competition – Hindi):* Winner – Suraj Gulati (IIM Shillong), 1st Runner Up – Sakshi Jain (DAIMSR, Nagpur)



*Breakfree (Solo Dance Competition):* Winner – Ishwar Abhange (JSPM's Rajarshi Shahu College of Engineering, Pune), 1st Runner Up – Ramya Ramesh (SIOM, Nashik)

*Mridang (Group Dance Competition):* Winner – Team Hypnotics (IGDTUW, Delhi) 1st Runner Up – Team 3.14 Crew (VIPS, Delhi)

*Pehel (Monologue Competition):* Winner – Vaishnavi Ray (PGDAV, DU), 1st Runner Up – Anushree Tiwari (Institute of Excellence in Higher Education, Bhopal)

The surprise elements of the Star Nights that were illuminated by comedian Gaurav Kapoor and singer Arjun Kanungo also saw massive participation from the students and faculty of IIM Shillong. The events were conducted with a mix of interaction with the students and performances by the artists.

Although conducted online, there was no limit to the creativity and imagination of the talent that was depicted in the annual cultural fest of IIM Shillong, Nirvana. The participants left the judges and audiences spellbound by their unique pieces, and the event was hence successfully concluded.

### IIM Shillong Hosts its Flagship Management Fest- Khlurthma'21

Khlurthma is the Annual Management Fest of IIM Shillong that invites participation from all premier B-Schools across India, which took place from 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021. "Khlurthma", the name translates to a "Battle of Stars", the origin of words being from the local Khasi language, spoken primarily in the state of Meghalaya. It tests the participants' business acumen and aptitude to solve real-life business problems in various management domains. The competitions aim to challenge the inventiveness, ingenuity, and business intelligence of the students. The 3 days were filled with competitions and performances with a total of more than 2700 participants and the prize money totalling up to 4 Lakhs that was organized by the 8 clubs of IIM Shillong.

'Close the Loop' was organized by **ConQuest: Consulting and Strategy Club** of IIM Shillong, which aimed to test the participants, having a knack for problem-solving and strategic-thinking through a case study problem. The competition saw 375+ participants battle it out and after a rigorous first round, 8 teams made it to the finals. Team Innovationists from TAPMI and Team Korra from GIM were declared as the winners.

'Nava-Parivartan', the annual event organized by **EcoBiz- the Sustainability & Business Club**, was a three-stage event, where the first stage consisted of a quiz on sustainability and business. The second stage consisted of a social business idea submission, testing their imaginative and feasibility aspects. There were five teams shortlisted based on innovation, and the potential social value that the business models offered. In the final round 'Vani: Voice for a cause', the shortlisted teams pitched their detailed business plans. The winners of the event were teams Strategists and Incognito.

**biTeSys - the Systems and Analytics Club**, brought back another edition of 'JustBidIT' - a virtual bidding simulation event that has always been a favourite among B-School students. Post an online

quiz-based elimination round with over a hundred participating teams from highly ranked business schools across the country, the top eight teams were shortlisted. These eight teams made investments in virtual companies with diverse sectoral investments, developing their portfolio across the simulation timeline by trading them, bidding their way towards cash prizes worth ₹50,000, and other rewards - to tackle the various scenarios put forward like the Pandemic, Vaccine Development, Tech Boom and so on. Team Lawgineer consisting of Paras Wadhwa, Paryant Misra, and Yougal Kargaonkar from IIM Shillong finished first.

**Zeitgeist- the Literary, Quizzing and Activities Club** of IIM Shillong, conducted the Asian Parliamentary debate competition: 'Coup-de-Grace'. In the first round of the event, participants were asked to submit their writeup for or against a given motion. Those selected for the second round presented a video submission of their arguments on a given topic. Eight teams were selected for the final round. In the end, Avantika Mathur, Dhruv Chawla, and Aayush Gupta of Team Spirit, IIM Ahmedabad finished first.

'Touchstone', a case study competition conducted by **Markathon- the Marketing Club** of IIM Shillong witnessed massive participation from students across B-Schools. This year the event collaborated with a skill-development company called Phoenix Global for a case study problem. The participants proved their mettle with various innovative and creative solutions for the real-world case problem of Phoenix Global. After a great tussle, Team AI from IIM Shillong and The Triumvirate team from NMIMS Mumbai emerged as the winners and runner-up, respectively.

**usHR- the HR club** of IIM Shillong successfully conducted 'tHRive' – its Flagship quiz and case study competition. The competition was spread across three rounds, an elimination quiz round, a case study round, and the grand finale where the top 5 teams presented their solutions in front of an esteemed jury comprising of "Mr. Rajesh Srivastava," CHRO (Capital Foods), and "Mr. Nishith Upadhyaya" Director, Advisory Services (SHRM). Team Talent Hunters from Fore School of Management grabbed 1st rank.



The 2021 edition of 'Shrinkhala' has been one of the most popular events conducted by **Opera- the Operations Club** of IIM Shillong. Participants from several reputed institutions like IIMs, IIFT, IITs actively participated in this event. Participants were challenged with a case study and after rigorous scrutiny, 6 best teams were

shortlisted for the case presentation round. Team Think Tank (Vishakha Gupta, Daniel Sinha, Yash Wani) from IIFT Delhi & Team AKS (Shanmugavel M, Aravinth S, G R Kumar) from VGSOM, IIT Kharagpur were the winner and runner up respectively.

On the last day of Khlurthma, **Niveshak- the Finance and Investment Club** of IIM Shillong, was geared up with the final round of its event, 'Show Me the Money.' The competition intended to test the participants' financial acumen across various domains such as valuation, corporate finance, mergers, acquisitions, etc. After a rigorous contest among around 400 participants, seven teams finally made it to the final round, wherein they had to present a stock pitch. Team Enigma from K J Somaiya Institute of Management (KJ SIM), Mumbai, emerged as the winners who bagged the cash prize of Rs 30,000.

The event was a resounding success, as the varied and thoughtful business plans provided a new dimension to the clubs' vision.

## Podium: Season 9

In Podium Season - 9, we hosted Ms Shalaka Verma, Director - Partner Technology, Microsoft. Ms Verma with an industry experience of over 20 years and donning various roles and responsibilities. Prior to moving to Microsoft, Ms Verma had worked with IBM for around 9 years in the domain of Technical Sales.

Ms Verma provided her thoughts on the topic "Responsible AI" and delved deep into the various facets of building the world of AI and ML responsibly. "It is not about being good, it is about being fair" - on Artificial Intelligence beautifully summed up the entire session. The speaker brought out several real-life examples to support the theories presented and patiently addressed several queries from the participants.



**IIM SHILLONG**  
**PODIUM**  
SEASON 09

“

**Topic: Responsible AI**

**Shalaka Verma**  
Director, Partner Technology  
Microsoft





**19-March-2021**  
Friday

## IIM Shillong Completes Summer Placements 2020-22

IIM Shillong successfully completed its summer placements for the 2020-22 batch, the largest batch in the institute's history with 250 students. The highest stipend was INR 3.00 lakhs, and the average stipend stood at INR 1.38 lakhs for two months, which witnessed an upward movement of 5% from last year. The top 20% and top 50% of the batch secured an average stipend of INR 2.38 lakhs and INR 2.11 lakhs, respectively. A whopping 56% of the batch secured a 6-digit stipend, and the average stipend of the top 50% of the batch witnessed an increase of 27%. The summer placement season at IIM Shillong witnessed participation from 70 recruiters, spanning across several domains such as Consulting & Strategy, Finance, General Management, Human Resources, IT & Analytics, Operations, and Sales & Marketing. Sales & Marketing continued to be the most sought-after domain this year, with 40% of the total offers made to the participants, closely followed by Consulting & Strategy. The number of offers in the General Management and HR & Operations domains saw an enormous increase of 71% and 90%, respectively.

This year saw an increase of more than 20% in the batch size, and as a testimony to the recruiters' increasing faith in IIM Shillong's emphasis on rigorous academics, the season witnessed participation from several prominent recruiters like AB InBev, Amazon, Bain Capability Network, BPCL, Cipla, Cognizant, D.E. Shaw, Deloitte USI, Emami Group, Goldman Sachs, Google, HSBC Bank, IBM, ICICI Bank, ITC, JSW, Nomura Investment Bank, Pidilite Industries, PepsiCo, TATA Steel, Titan, Xiaomi and Yes Bank. The institute also hosted many first-time recruiters, including Aditya Birla Capital, Amagi Media Labs, EY, GamaSec, Godrej, IDFC First Bank, Lubrizol, Mahindra GMC, Microsoft, United Health Group (Optum), Shell and Udaan.



The PGP 2020-22 batch of IIM Shillong, which proudly boasts of its academic, gender and industrial experience diversity, has been offered several roles ranging across Advisory, Analytics, Change Management, Consulting, Corporate Strategy, Equity Research, Global Investment Research, Global Management, International Business, Investment Banking, Market Research, Product Management, Supply Chain Management and Talent Acquisition.

The season also witnessed an increase in offers in the Product. Management role owing to the growing interest in the field among the students. Category Management, Cybersecurity Consulting, Demand Generation, and Digital Transformation were some of the new unique roles offered in this season

## IIM Shillong holds 8<sup>th</sup> edition of its Annual Alumni Meet - Mélange

The Alumni Committee successfully organized Mélange 2021- the annual Alumni Meet of IIM Shillong. The virtual event was a grand success with over 250 alumni from across the globe gracing the event and taking active part in it. The eighth edition of the meet witnessed an overwhelming response from the alumni who have graduated since the inception of the institute. Due to the present scenario, the committee had to organize the event in a virtual capacity, however due to this, we saw an even greater turnout than ever before, with alums located all over the world, logging in and taking part in the event.

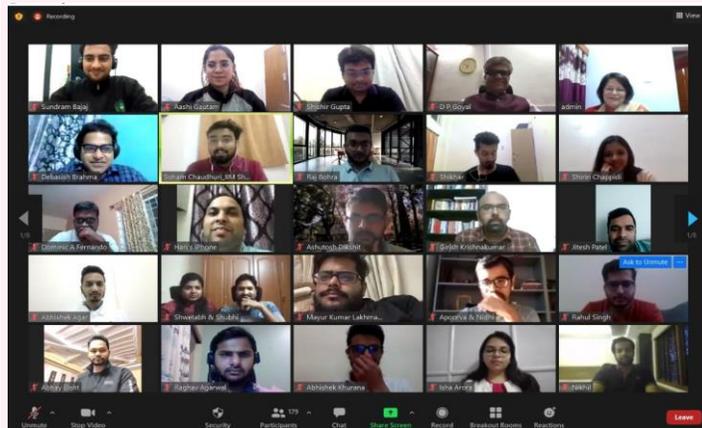
The momentous occasion was graced by the presence of Prof. D.P Goyal, the Director of IIM Shillong, Professor Naliniprava Tripathy, Dean Alumni and External Relations, and Dr. Ashutosh Murti, Chair Alumni and External Relations.

They shared with the alumni, the current developments and achievements of the institute and echoed the importance of alumni to the alma mater while laying emphasis on the need for stronger ties between alumni and the institute.

This was followed by a performance by famous stand-up comedian Vipul Goyal who thoroughly entertained our alumni with his act and caused a laughter riot. Post this, the floor was opened for the alumni to share their journey and experiences since they graduated from IIM Shillong.

Special performance by world famous singer and musician Ankit Tiwari assured that the attendees had one memorable and melodious Sunday night with their old friends.

The event ended on a high note, with the alumni promising on a closer connect, active participation and to help the institute in every possible way in the future.



## Emerge 2021

EmergE 2021: The Annual Entrepreneurship Summit of IIM Shillong kicked off on 20th March, 2021 with a magnificent and heart-warming live sand art performance by artist Kaushik Bose at the inauguration ceremony which was graced by the presence of Prof. Basav Roychoudhury, Prof. Natalie West Kharkongor, Prof. Sanjoy Mukherjee and Prof. Sanjeeb Kakoty, chairperson of Incubation and Enterprise Support Centre (IESC), IIM Shillong. The live sand art performance beautifully portrayed all the milestones of IIM Shillong since its inception including CEDNER, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Centre for Policy Research and Analysis, and the recent MOU with FICCI-FLO. The performance ended with a grand tribute to Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. At the inauguration ceremony which preceded the sand art performance, Prof. Kakoty gave a brief inaugural speech on the importance of identification and fostering the entrepreneurial spirits of the students of the institute.

The theme of this year's EmergE is "A Leap to the Next Orbit" sought to celebrate the spirit of the people who confront challenges, who get up after a fall, who conjure opportunity out of adversity – who dare to take the leap to the next orbit.

The first panel discussion of constituted some of the most promising women entrepreneurs constituted the panel which was moderated by Prof. Neelam Rani. The theme for the Panel Discussion 1 was: "Women Leads Entrepreneurship". The discussion had Dasumarlin Majaw, Founder of Smoky Falls Tribe Coffee – Meghalaya's first indigenous coffee brand, Rimjhim Ray, Co-Founder of Spotle.ai and Shriya Rai, Co-Founder of Shashakt Bharat as the panelists.

The first ever Entrepreneur Alumni Felicitation ceremony which was a first time for the Institute, remains an initiative to recognize and felicitate the entrepreneurs who graduated from the institute. Not only do these leaders inspire the students a great deal, they also form the entrepreneurial foundation of the only IIM in the North East. Alumni of IIM Shillong - Karthik Venkateswaran (Batch of 2011 - 2013), Co-Founder of GoBumpr.com, Rameswar Misra (Batch of 2011- 2013), Co-Founder of Bigphi and Roshan Farhan (Batch of 2014 - 2016), Co-Founder and CEO of Gobillion were felicitated at the event.

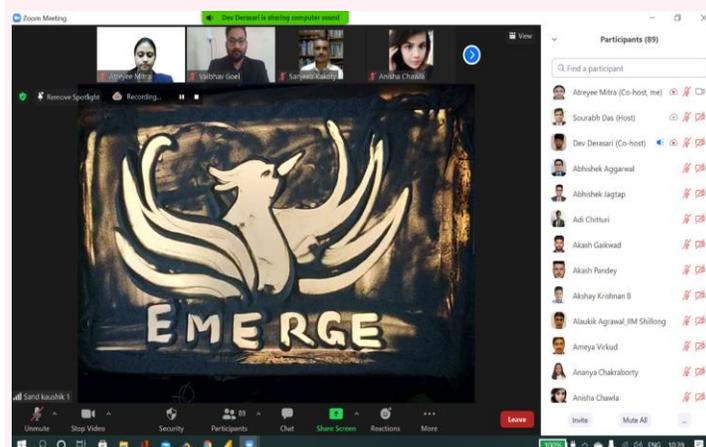
The last event of the first day of EmergE'21 was the Keynote Speech by Mr Pranav Kumar. He is the founder and CEO of Plus Capital which is a leading financial services provider in India. It was founded in the year 2002. Plus Capital specializes in Private as well as corporate wealth management. It also provides services like tax

advisory, private equity investment advisory and M&A advisory. In 2018, he founded Human Experience aka HuEx Inc. HuEx aims to enable people to achieve the desired balance in their lives by taking the extra pressure off. This is being done by creating a set of trained lifestyle managers who will support and help people strike the balance and live the most efficiently. The theme for the keynote speech was "Future of the Living Experience". The Keynote Speech saw enthusiastic participation from students.

The summit continued onto the second day and it concluded on the evening of 21st March, 2021 with a great Keynote Speech delivered by Ankit Agarwal, the Founder & CEO of Phool.co. Mr Ankit has made a place for himself in Forbes 30 Under 30 and is also recognized as a UN Young Leader for SDGs. Phool.co transforms lives by manufacturing organic products from flowers offered to temples and it saves the Ganges from flower pollution in the process. The extremely engaging Keynote Speech saw enthusiastic participation from the batch.

Day 2 of EmergE'21 started with Panel Discussion 2. The theme of the panel discussion was "Travelling Through the Greater Orbit." This panel enlightened the students of IIM Shillong about the real possibilities and opportunities that exist in their ideas for entrepreneurship in the most unconventional ways. The panelists were Shruthi (Venugopal) Nithin, Founder of Floap, a pet-tech company that works to be a 360° solution for all pet needs; Dhruvam Thaker, Founder of The SMART Taxi – a cab aggregator company that provides specially crafted cab experience and Vinit Jain, Founder of Voilà! Digi which is a music label as well as a digital distribution service that empowers independent artists. The panel was moderated by Prof. Chandradeep (CD) Mitra.

The Elevator Pitch Competition which was held in the afternoon of day 2 saw great participation from the students. The participants were asked to make a pitch, 90 seconds or less in length, on a given start-up in front of the judge, Prof. CB Mohan. The winners of the Elevator Pitch Competition were: Manish Kumar (1st), Divyaraj Chandwaskar (2nd) and Vinushree Jain (3rd). All the winners are participants of PGP20.



## OFF BEAT

### The CSR Sojourn: Reflections and Insights from India

“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.” The famous opening lines from ‘A Tale of Two Cities’ by Charles Dickens are so true even today! In an age of rapid and pervasive globalization, modern organizations are struggling hard to survive and grow in a rapidly changing business scenario fraught with uncertainty, recession and turbulence. When profit motive appears to be the dominant drive among business leaders operating in an aggressively competitive environment, the critical question naturally arises – where is the scope for directing our efforts to discharge our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)? But the fact remains the Government of India has made it mandatory for companies to invest 2% of their net profits in specifically identified and scheduled CSR activities and hardly few companies are even aware of what is CSR in essence and how to go about delivering the initiatives around CSR? This presents a challenging case of learning about CSR.

To start with, let us revisit two significant events in the year 1970. On September 13, 1970 New York Times published an article by the eminent economist Milton Friedman where his pronouncement came bold and clear – “The only social responsibility of business is to make profits”. Surprisingly enough, it was in the very same year J.R.D. Tata, the head and patriarch of Tata Sons, the apex body of all Tata companies had passed his instruction to all the Tata group companies to include a clause on Stakeholder Management in their Articles of Association. Isn't the drama of life, even the corporate life a play of opposites in two extremes?

Tata Group with its century-old culture and cherished values always remained a glowing example demonstrating an authentic synthesis of business interests and social concerns. However, it was only during the last decade of the last century that growing interest in CSR among the business community worldwide was becoming discernible. Questions were being raised on the ultimate goal of business activity and the nature of relationship between the business organization and the social context in which it is embedded. Are there other things in life, even during the running of business, more important than merely chasing numbers and targets? All significant changes and evolutionary developments in history begin with asking some deep and even disturbing questions. CSR was no exception and the times they were changing.

What were the factors that were responsible for this development of interest in undertaking CSR initiatives? With the spread of the phenomenon of globalization like wild fire, business leaders began to realize that we live in an inter-connected world where mutual interdependence forms the basis of our existence and progress. For

the survival and sustained growth of business itself, apart from anything else, it is not sufficient to limit our thoughts and concerns within the boundary of the organization. Thus, the spectrum of initiatives around CSR is an ever expanding one that may start from the employees and shareholders but includes the customers, the suppliers, the social milieu, the government, the natural environment and even the competitor. Moreover, with increasing thrust on responsible Corporate Governance, there has been a shift from preoccupation with interests of shareholders to engagement with concern for multiple stakeholders from diverse constituencies. At a micro level, with the championing of transparency as a value that demands availability and smooth flow of information, companies can no longer afford to manipulate the customers and arm-twist the vendors. At a macro level, corporate leaders are compelled to consider the impact of their business decisions on the community and the environment at large – the distant others. Further, with increasing dependence on stock market for equity financing, there is also the growing need to attract and fulfill the expectations of conscious investors who value the goodwill of companies that invest in CSR initiatives. CSR today is not just a part-time philanthropic activity but a strategic imperative directly linked to business results for long term sustainability of organizations. It may also be mentioned that the scope of CSR is no longer limited to monetary donations for a social cause. Companies need to reconsider their new role as partners and facilitators in development and participate in capacity building programs for the disadvantaged sections of the society. This will raise the overall standard of living, increase the purchasing power of people and thereby expand the markets for selling their own products and services.

Incidentally such initiatives by any company also boost the morale of the employees by instilling in them a sense of pride and ownership. This has direct and positive impact on their level of motivation and thereby enhances their productivity and contribution towards the achievement of the organizational goals and objectives. After all, engagement with CSR activities does make ‘good business sense’.

It may be mentioned here that companies in which the level of employee satisfaction is low are likely to be the least effective in CSR initiatives. It is not possible to generate goodwill in the external environment without taking good care of the needs and aspirations of the employees. Charity begins at home indeed.

As to the ‘drivers’ of CSR, they could be both external and internal. Public policy guidelines, environmental regulations, labor laws and the like constitute the external drivers. Among the internal drivers the most important is the commitment of top management in CSR



## ODE

### Reminiscence

The sky becomes a brilliant red as yet another dusk sets in,  
 And birds fly back to their nest in the mellow light;  
 Flowers wither and fall as clouds unveil the moon so serene,  
 Silence creeps in as the day slowly turns into the night.

On such a melancholic evening, I wish I could go back  
 To that time when your voice still kept ringing in my ears,  
 To when I could only see the bright stars against the pitch black,  
 To when every moment felt like it would last for a thousand years.

My heart is beating madly and it's still feeling tight,  
 As I stand still, frozen, in the silence of the twilight.

After running a thousand miles I finally reached that coveted hill top  
 And I'm standing today where you had always wanted to see me.  
 But why does my heart still feel heavy and keep tightening up more?  
 Perhaps I already had the perfect happiness I was futilely looking for.  
 And how longer should I keep running? How far until it's fine to stop?  
 The sky above is limitless, but it seems like mere emptiness now.

Even the blooming spring trees can't cheer me up on this vast land,  
 Because I know that you are no longer by my side to hold my hand.

Dreams fade, hopes get shattered, but the clock ticks away;  
 So I need to start running again before this moment slips away.  
 As the sky turns from a madly brilliant red to a deeper amethyst,  
 Once again I must strengthen my heart and clench my fist.

For if life is a movie where every actor gets a fixed screen time  
 And every fleeting scene gets archived in the reels of my memory,  
 I don't want to regret not saying goodbye for a second time ---  
 I wish to cherish every second to create my most precious story.

**Swagata Ghosh (PGP19)**  
 Roll No.: 2019PGP191

### My best is yet to come!

This poem portrays the willpower of a man to overcome the darkness of the past. It captures his determination and enthusiasm to face all the challenges and hurdles in life in his quest to climb the mountain of dreams and reach the ultimate peak.

Finally, the night is over  
 At zenith will spark my sun  
 My dawn has just arisen  
 My best is yet to come

I've just started to crawl  
 My trapped feet are yet to run  
 There are records to be broken  
 My race has just begun,  
 At zenith will spark my sun  
 My best is yet to come!

There are Everest yet to be scaled  
 My summit has just begun  
 I've conquered battles only a few  
 There are world wars yet to be won  
 My dawn has just arisen  
 My best is yet to come!

I've perfected skills not too many  
 There is so much left to learn  
 I am a flower yet to bloom  
 Just wait, while the spring returns  
 At zenith will spark my sun  
 My best is yet to come!

Life has tested me enough  
 It's time for the knockout punch  
 It is now my turn  
 These flames are just the sparkle  
 An explosion is due;  
 I'm a star yet to burn  
 At zenith will spark my sun  
 My best is yet to come!

**Divyaraj Chandwaskar**  
 2020PGP202

## ALUM SPEAK

Lockdown, Tea and Murakami: I have been working with Google since 2015. Google continuously ranks as one of the best places to work because of its incredible infrastructure and work culture. My experience has lived up to that reputation. We have access to multiple cafeterias serving different cuisines of food, a fully equipped gym with qualified trainers, and, most importantly for me, access to tea with friends whenever I want - friends with whom I could share my professional dilemmas and personal anxieties, without hesitation or fear. All of which made it really difficult for me to adapt when the offices closed down on March 18, 2020. Life under lockdown has been a bittersweet symphony - more bitter than sweet. For the first time in my life, I had to actively think about cooking. I started off with something which I thought was simple - by trying to make tea. The first time I made tea, it tasted like boiled milk with a faint essence of tea. From this, I concluded that I needed to keep adding tea leaves to the boiling milk till it reached the desired reddish-brown colour (which, in hindsight, should have been pretty evident). The resulting liquid looked like a normal cup of milk tea. It tasted like an unrefined version of bitter gourd juice with a sandy texture. Finally, after a few iterations, I learnt how to make tea. Along with that, I learnt to cook basic stuff - rice, khichdi, chicken curry, omelette. I am now able to make them quite easily, and friends and family have not been offended by its taste, which, for me, is success. The bitter part of this bittersweet experience has been due to my emotional challenges. My struggles with anxiety and depression are not new. But, they reared their heads with renewed intensity during the lockdown, mostly in the form of anger. I would have sudden and inexplicable urges to scream at and control people around me, without any provocation. My inability to identify the root cause of my anger made it worse, as

it contradicted my identity as a rational person. I tried telling myself that lockdown was the most effective way to stop the spread of the virus. But this intellectual understanding did not always translate to emotional acceptance. During those initial days, my moods would oscillate between feeling angry and feeling afraid. Afraid of not the virus, but of hurting others through my anger. I am in a better place now. After a few difficult episodes with my girlfriend, and some reflection, I realized that I'm probably using my anger to suppress my anxieties and pain. Anxiety caused by the uncertainty of the situation, and sadness caused by the realization that I am powerless against it. Now, I feel less angry and more sad. But, from what I have understood from therapy, that is progress in psychological terms. Lockdown taught me the value of normal life. Now, when I make tea, or wash the dishes, I try imagining myself as a character from a Murakami novel. Most of Murakami's protagonists have the admirable ability to find beauty in the mundane, like finding peace in making pasta or ironing clothes. I have not been as successful, but I keep trying. And my friends and family have been more supportive than Murakami's supporting characters, something that I am deeply grateful for. There's a feature in Google Photos through which it notifies you of what you were doing on the same date in the past years. 5 years ago, around this time, I got to visit New York for the first time. I was a few kilos heavier, and my heart was a few kilos lighter. Digital photographs are like balance sheets - a permanent, ageless snapshot of a point in time. But, the pictures in my memories are more like polaroid frames. The places have faded out. But the people in them stand out vividly. Yes, I miss all those places, and my old life. But I am grateful to have a supportive partner, friends and family, people who have stuck through thick and thin. This realization overwhelms me at times, but in a good way. Because, all said and done, that is more important than anything else in life.

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