

Hello
Spring!

THE PINE CHRONICLE

News, Views and Creative Expressions

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EDITORIAL

The sound, sight and smell of death that the pandemic has unleashed is certainly difficult for anyone to accept. Added to it is the feeling of utter helplessness that has added to the general gloom and despair. The realization that there is precious little that we can do to change the situation makes people feel absolutely despondent. This leads to despair and a sense of helplessness which brings about an inability in the individual to rise up and face the adversity. The loop of slipping further down in the spiral of hopelessness can result in disastrous consequences for the individual as well as the society. This has already been set in motion and it is time to challenge it before it goes out of control. The ability to face such a scenario is called resilience. It is the innate human ability that allows some people to be knocked down by the adversities of life and yet come back to face and challenge it. Instead of allowing the difficulties or failures to overshadow their lives, the resilient individual seeks a way to change course, emotionally heal, and continue living life on their own terms. Researchers have always been interested to understand what makes some people more resilient than others and what factors contribute to human resilience. It was seen that some factors such as a positive attitude, an optimistic outlook and the ability to regulate emotions were crucial in nurturing human resilience. While optimism enables the person to reduce the effects of stress on both the mind and body and enable a perspective that usually escapes the pessimist. This gives the person access to their own cognitive resources in a much wider spectrum that enables what may be called as a cool-headed analysis of the situation and consideration of behavioral paths that might be more productive in the given situation. The question that is often asked is whether there could be a genetic predisposition for resilience, or whether the conditioning received in early environments and life circumstances play a role in how resilient an individual becomes. There is no definitive answer to this but it is a fact that both nature and nurture do play a part in developing resilient individuals. But at the same time, while understanding the nurture aspect of resilience, it has been seen that individuals who have undergone trauma often display a

higher level of resilience. But at the same time, there are also instances of traumatized individuals displaying maladaptive coping skills and warped personalities due to their trauma which reduces their ability to cope with future crises. The next question that arises is whether resilience can be imparted or taught? It has to be accepted that of the many factors that determine resilience, genetics and early life experiences are a given and cannot be changed. What however shows promise is the ability of individuals to learn mind control techniques, promoting positivity and engaging in activities that promotes a positive outlook. All of these certainly help individuals to grow more resilient. Starting with the proposition that overcoming pain and disappointment without letting them become overwhelming is extremely difficult, but thankfully not impossible to overcome. Probably one has to start with cultivating healthy habits such as getting enough sleep, eating well, and exercising. These has been proven to substantially reduce stress and thereby promote resilience. However, developing the self alone may not be enough to boost resilience. The need to nurture close relationships with family and friends is absolutely crucial to boost resilience. In the end, it all boils down to the great human feeling called compassion. The light that one discovers within oneself is useless unless it is used to dispel the darkness, that at some time, envelopes self as well as others. Discovering the light within to dispel the darkness everywhere is what Resilience is all about.

ABOUT NUKSA

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

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by Prof. Atul Mehta and Prof. Debasisha Mishra. The inauguration event saw the presence of Dr. Ramakrishna Sura Additional Director, Directorate of Jan Shikshan Sansthan, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Government of India and Prof Ashutosh.B.Murti –Chairman MDP & Consultancy, IIM Shillong along with faculty members and MDP Officers from IIM Shillong.

The 5 day training was facilitated by In house Faculty and Guest Expert Mr Jahar Lal Chakraborty – Senior Accounts Officer from State Directorate, Public Financial Management System (PFMS), Ministry of Finance, Guwahati, Assam and Mr Rutwik Pathak- a public procurement specialist and head procurements under (ASPIRe) Project.

The participants from different regions of the North East from varied back ground and functions, added diversity as well as encouraged inter peer learning and interaction during the training program.



Celebrating Achievements

We are proud to share that three young leaders from IIM Shillong have made it to the

'Dare2Compete Top 30 Competitive Leaders 2021'. We congratulate them and wish them the very best for their future endeavours.

Aritro Datta

Shailesh Maheshwari

Arko Datta



OFFBEAT

Lessons from A Great Master: Precious Moments With Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

It was August 2012. Prof. Keya Sengupta, the then Acting Director of IIM Shillong called me to her office. IIM Shillong hosts an International Conference on Sustainability (SUSCON) every year. I had been part of the core group of its organizing committee since the beginning. This time she gave me a challenge. She made me the Chairman of the organizing committee for the next conference (SUSCON III) to be held in March 2013. The erstwhile Chairman of SUSCON has just left the Institute – hence this decision.

My mind started working from day one. Who would be the Chief Guest? And the first name that came to me was that of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the 'Missile Man' of India. Why? Because, even after he ceased to be the President of India he went on addressing tirelessly the student community and children across the country. Moreover I had an inspiring session with him at IIM Calcutta. My mind went back to the late 90s of the last century. Dr. Kalam had come to deliver the Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Oration at the Management Centre for Human Values of IIM Calcutta. He was then the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister of India. A line of Z category security vehicles came honking at the Centre but from the main car came out a short and simple man with a smiling face. He was humility personified. He was dressed in black whereas we were in white clothes as per the tradition of the Centre. Smilingly he asked for the shawl the then Director of IIM Calcutta Prof. Amitava Bose was wearing during the group photograph. Then he willingly took off his shoes to enter the main Seminarium because that was the practice we followed at the Centre.

Then we heard a great scientist mesmerizing us talking abundantly on the Nobel Laureate poet for an hour. We were inspired.

So I had no doubt about my choice for the Chief Guest of SUSCON III. But how do I get him to IIM Shillong? I started exploring avenues of contact and finally established connection with his office. For six weeks I did not call any meeting of the SUSCON III organizing committee but kept on trying to get a nod from his New Delhi office. Finally the green signal came in the last week of September 2012. We were charged.

Then the auspicious day came. He arrived in Shillong the night before around 10 PM and went directly to the Governor House where he would be staying as State Guest. Both our Acting Director and I were waiting there. He gave us appointment at around 10 30 PM. We presented him with the

Institute brochure and the students' magazines. Our Director requested him to take a course for the students and lo! He willingly agreed to our utter surprise and joy!

We left him around midnight. The next morning he was with us at the Institute to inaugurate SUSCON III. I was sitting beside him. Two students were conducting the Inaugural programme. Quietly he asked me – "Can you write down the names of the two students for me?" I did. Then he went up to speak. While he began addressing the audience and before he came to the main part of his speech, he thanked the two students by taking their names for their contribution to the event. I was amazed. I have invited so many great speakers during my academic life spanning over two decades – stalwarts from academia, industry, government and so on. I have never seen anyone doing this before. This was a glowing lesson for me. I was charmed with his attention to details.

After the Inauguration there was High Tea arranged for all present. At that time many dignitaries and officials came to meet Dr. Kalam. In the crowd was a little boy waiting for his autograph. Dr. Kalam's attention was drawn towards the child. Leaving aside the others he willingly gave the boy his autograph and took a snap with him. He would always find his way to reach out to children. I learnt it for my life.

Then he again came to our campus in July 2013 to take the course on 'Social Transformation through Technological Applications' for our second year PGDM students. He was in campus for two days. It was an inspiring experience. We found the man above his 80s standing for hours and lecturing with such passion and vibrant enthusiasm. He had a wonderful and unique capacity of engaging the students in the class with compelling questions. In his turn he would patiently answer all the questions from the students. Then during the later part of the day the students would make presentations on the assignments he had given them in advance. It was amazing to see the old man waiting till midnight and listening intently to all the presentations and making his wise observations from time to time. He had only words of encouragement for one and all. The vibration of inspiration was palpable in the auditorium.

By this time I have come to interact with him several times. Lovingly he would call me 'Sustainability Professor'. He came again last year and left an indelible impression on the students while teaching the same course. It was a lifetime experience from the students. They would have a lot of stories to share with others about him.

This year also he had made his commitment to come and take a course again. He had changed the title of the course this time – 'Making the Earth a Livable Planet'. He reached our campus on Monday July 27 at 5 45 PM. While resting in the Guest House he called the security guard who was accompanying him from the airport. When the guard came he personally thanked him and took a snap with him. This was probably the last lesson he left for us – acknowledge the contribution of even those who apparently don't matter to others.

At 6 30 PM that evening he walked up to the podium to address the students. Within minutes he fell.

O what a fall was that my countrymen!

When his body was being taken out of Bethany Hospital the sky of Shillong was rent with shouts from thousands mostly young people - "Abdul Kalam Amar Rahe!" and also "Jab Tak Suraj Chand Rahega Abdul Kalam Ka Naam Rahega!"

He was essentially a teacher. Destiny gave him a fitting finale. He died in harness while lecturing from the podium.

I sit and look back and ask myself – What did he leave behind for me? We, the management professors only talk about 'Childlike' leadership. Here was a living example. Leaving aside everything and everyone he would prefer to spend his time with children and the youth.

Of course, his words and life will inspire one and all for generations to come. Yet there was something else. If you had looked into his eyes they radiated something special. In one word it was – LOVE! Love that emanated right from the heart of a world class scientist, a man with brain power! Love for humanity at large without discrimination! This is the hallmark of a truly great leader.

Kalam Saab! People's President! Your 'Sustainability Professor' salutes you in silence from the hills of Shillong!

Prof. Sanjoy Mukherjee

