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# EMPOWERING TIMES



**THINKING ALOUD**  
A Brave New World of  
Education  
Jay

**PODIUM**  
Prof. R S S Mani  
VP - Institutional  
Development - ITM Group

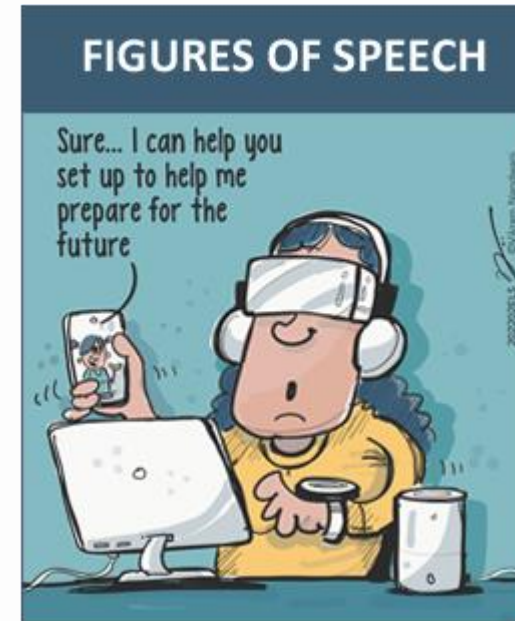


**WE RECOMMEND**  
Two Indian Lives  
Reviewed by Jay

Dear Reader,

The Indian education system has come a long way. Indicative of this transformative journey are the encouraging highlights of the Union Budget FY23. The Budget has increased its allocation for the education sector by 12%, acknowledged learning losses due to closure of schools, and heralded news of a one class-one TV channel and a digital university which will be established to provide world-class universal education with personalised learning experience to students at their doorsteps.

While some may argue that the funds allocated is below the National Education Policy 2020 recommended 6% of GDP and that learning gaps cannot be bridged with TV channels alone amid the social inequalities and lack of digital infrastructure, every step is certainly a drop in the ocean.



ET this month, looks at '**Preparing the Next Generation India: Education Imperatives for a New World**'.

On the **Podium**, academician **Prof. R S S Mani**, Vice President of ITM Group, highlights some of the strides accomplished by the Indian education system, the impact of technology and the bright future ahead. In the **Thinking Aloud** segment, **Jay** shares his thoughts on how the education sector along with students, teachers & parents continue to brave through the challenges that the pandemic has brought up.

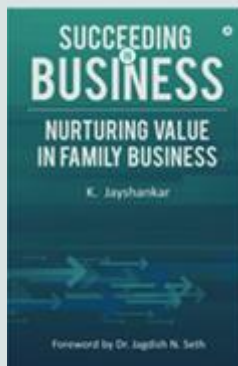
In the **We Recommend** section, **Jay** reviews '**My Life in Full: Work, Family, and Our Future**' and '**An Incomplete Life**', juxtaposing the lives of two unique leaders - Indra Nooyi & Vijaypat Singhania and brings out a contrasting view of how they dealt with the situations in their personal & corporate lives.

In **Figures of Speech**, we have **Vikram's** toons teaching each other!

Please also [Click Here](#) to check out our Special issue of ET, which is a collation of selected themes that were featured over the years highlighting the changing landscape of the business world. This special edition has been well received and can be [Downloaded Here](#) for easy reading and is a collector's item.

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To read our previous issues, do visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) & [LinkedIn](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!

## Succeeding in Business: Nurturing Value in Family Business



*What makes some family businesses grow from strength to strength? How do you ensure that value is created and not destroyed when a business passes hands from one generation to the next in the Indian context? How can old families incorporate new ideas to revitalize themselves? Is there a role for professional management in Indian family business?*

*This book offers answers to the vexatious issues that families face in their growth journey. The pointers provided can be used as a guide for nurturing the business and to leverage the traditional strengths that family businesses possess. As a counsellor and trusted advisor, the author, **K. Jayshankar (Jay)**, has had a ring-side view of how family businesses have functioned. The practical insights drawn from his experience of four decades has been combined with conceptual elements to become a valuable primer for a family that wishes to succeed in the competitive marketplace that is India.*

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## THINKING ALOUD

### A Brave New World of Education

Jay

Perhaps nowhere has the disruption caused by the pandemic been more felt than in the field of education. The cost of lost school time cannot be estimated in financial numbers alone, for how can one estimate the impact of psychological loss for a young child arising from home isolation and social deprivation caused by time away from the comforting presence of school friends? Indeed, the virus has hit children hardest.

The economic impact on parents also has been heavy too, of course. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) late last year by the leading NGO, Pratham, revealed an important change: the number of enrolments in private schools has fallen over the last two years (from 28.8% in 2020 to 24.4% in 2021), coupled with the rise in government school enrolment (from 64.3% to 65.8%, for the same period). Sadly, this is not an endorsement of quality education in government but a reflection of the economic hit that parents have felt due to drop in household income. Their study also showed a sharp rise in private tuition, as desperate parents scrambled to cover for the absence of quality teaching. The shift to the virtual world of education has its merits but in the short term only highlighted the digital divide at primary school levels.

The re-opening of schools was welcomed not only by students (and parents) but also a generation of teachers who felt lost in the digital swamp into which they were suddenly thrust by the pandemic. But, the start-stop world that we have moved into has meant that the process flow for education is in a perpetual hiccup mode. The erratic policy of state governments towards allowing schools to function (and the absence of competitive sporting events), and the confusion caused by vaccination status, has added new elements into the equation. While examinations and children are a heady mix at the best of times, poor evaluation of learning at early stages may not be life-impacting one may argue, but for admission to professional levels, the issue warrants serious consideration. Yet, there is no clarity despite the fact that the pandemic has moved into its second year of academic disruption.

But all is not lost. In every disaster lies some hidden opportunity. The unforeseen events of the last two years has also thrust a whole generation of children willy-nilly into the digital world. With screen time replacing the physical world, parents cannot complain about the excess indulgence in the virtual world, however damaging it may seem to be. These digital natives will be adept in the metaverse that looms ahead of us, which perhaps may be a blessing in the future.

The rise of Edtech also signals a huge business opportunity. Consider the reality that Coursera reported over 92 million learners last year. While only about 4 million are paid users, from a dissemination of knowledge perspective, the fact that popular courses included hard subjects like Machine Learning (from Stanford), Data Management, etc., to 'soft' ones like science of well-being (from Yale), etc., indicate that the quest for new knowledge runs high. Arguably, when MOOCs (massive online open courses) was first envisaged in 2008, the world may not have imagined that the idea would get a huge unintended boost due to an external element called the pandemic. With Indian Edtech ventures now aiming to win customers across geographies, the intent is to unlock commercial value from a field which has never been very good at monetizing knowledge. While making money out of education sounds sleazy and scandalous at first blush, the demands of the marketplace are clear: for innovation to flourish, new ideas in education need to be financially rewarded.

What about the exorbitant price to be paid by the learner (and her family)? Well, we didn't say that we have answers to all problems, did we? Go figure!

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## Podium

Prof. R S S Mani

VP - Institutional Development – ITM Group



*Prof. R S S Mani is a founding member of the ITM Family and has been associated with ITM for the last 29 years. He is acknowledged as one of the pillars of ITM & has been largely responsible for its phenomenal growth over the last 2 decades into a high-quality service provider in the higher education domain.*

*He is currently VP - Institutional Development and Chief Mentor for all campuses across India. He is widely acknowledged as an institution builder and a renowned out of the box management thinker. An alumnus of the prestigious Tata Institute of Social Sciences, he was a gold medallist in the MBA Human Resources Stream. He has had very successful stints in Wipro in HR & Training and Tata Institute of Social Sciences as a full-time faculty for 5 years before joining the ITM Group. Prof. R S S Mani is highly regarded as an HRD Guru in HRD circles for his pioneering contributions in the areas of Training & Development and Career Guidance & Leadership. He is also a highly respected authority in the area of career planning & guidance for students, faculty, and executives.*

*Over the recent five years, he has been a very successful life coach and mentor to many senior executives in large Indian & MNCs. He is a trustee and part of the advisory boards of many reputed NGOs in Mumbai, Gujarat, and other interior parts of Maharashtra. He is the recipient of over 20 awards in the last decade for his outstanding contribution to the cause of management education & career guidance and for his contributions in the areas of educating the underprivileged. He is respected as a mentor par excellence and admired for his innovation & value addition. He has helped thousands groom their careers and transform their lives into a meaningful & fulfilling journey.*

*Prof. R S S Mani is the immediate past President - Bombay Management Association (2020-2021) and was recently honoured as the first recipient of the HSSE HR Icon Award for his legendary contribution to HR.*

**ET: How does Indian education fare with the rest of the world? Skill-wise, are we preparing the next generation ready to take on the challenges of the future?**

**RM:** Being in education for the last three decades, I have always maintained that the education system in India is par excellence and can be compared with any education system anywhere in the world. However, in the initial stages, I think we gave too much emphasis to knowledge. But in the last 2 decades or so with the thrust of skilling led by our honourable Prime Minister, we have seen a scenario where there is a lot of emphasis on skilling and also linking skilling to employment and employability. This has seen the transformation of courses which were always seen as theoretical into practical applicable job-oriented courses. The traditional B.Com. courses are now available in different avatars such as Bachelors in Accounting and Finance, Bachelors in Banking and Insurance, Bachelors in Management Studies, to name a few. These courses are very much as per industry requirements for young graduates to be able to contribute to their jobs from day one after joining the organisation. We also see an increasing number of courses coming up in the allied Health Sciences and Paramedical Sciences. Besides the traditional B.Sc. nursing course which is a Bachelor's degree of four years, we are witnessing the emergence of short-term courses such as nursing assistant, general duty assistant ophthalmic assistant, just to name a few. This gives a unique opportunity to individuals who are unable to do the full-time courses to take up short duration skilling courses which can assure them employment in the same domain. This also gives them an opportunity to gain some experience and continue their studies on a part-time or flexible basis depending on the nature of the program that they wish to study.

**ET: The Covid-19 pandemic has suddenly turned the world upside down. What are some of the new challenges faced by India's higher education institutions now?**

**RM:** The current pandemic has transformed the world into a digital learning universe. Actually, institutions of eminence had already migrated to the digital platform at least 5 years ago. However, their ability to transform into it seamlessly was always a challenge and was a slow process. But due to the pandemic and the lockdown, all the classes transitioned from the physical mode to the digital mode almost instantly and seamlessly. This meant that the teachers and professors had to migrate to the digital platform and go through a process of unlearning, re-learning and learning how to use this technology effectively. This was possible with the support of platforms like Google Classroom, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, among others. Hence, the better part of the lockdown that was induced by the pandemic was that we had to develop a robust learning platform where one could not only deliver sessions digitally, but conduct online examinations, accept assignments and projects online and ensure that the complete delivery of the learning system happened seamlessly. The only blessing of the pandemic was the speed at which the transition happened which was something no one expected. In fact, the transition to the

physical mode of learning happened at an exponential speed that one would never visualise will happen in normal times. As a direct consequence of the above, knowledge was available at the click of a button, and one could access resources both national and international to enhance one's knowledge and skills. This would certainly help to develop the right competencies to enhance one's prospects of quick employment. This entire learning university became one large platform where students and faculty from across the globe could connect with each other, learn from each other, and support the learning process of each other. This also enabled peer learning both at the student level and faculty level and the entire learning universe had truly become a global repository of knowledge and skills.

**ET: The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) aims to change the education landscape in India for the better. What are your thoughts on this and how will this impact the growing business of education?**

**RM:** The National Education Policy (NEP) has been debated and discussed in plenty for the last couple of months. There is absolutely no denying the fact that NEP is going to transform the face of education in our country. The salient features of NEP which is truly a game changer include the following: the first among them is the facility to have inter-disciplinary learning options. This will enable students to choose the subjects that they would like to study even though they may be from different streams such as science, commerce, and arts. This will help them prepare themselves in different areas of interest while specialising in one career option of their choice. The second salient feature which would help students tremendously is to have entry and exit options as part of their learning process to develop their career. They would be allowed to complete a certain portion of the course, get a certification, take on a job and at an appropriate point come back to join the education system to get certified with a higher degree and go back and seek a job of a higher level. This would ensure that the learning process goes on a continuous basis and educational certification depends on the milestones that they have completed. Here students choose to start with the certification program, move on to a diploma program, upscale to a degree program and subsequently do a Master's program at their own pace and time.

**ET: It is said that the pandemic provided the tipping point for Edtech globally. What are your thoughts on the impact of technology in the education sector?**

**RM:** Yes, Edtech has impacted the entire teaching universe and affected faculty to a great extent. However, I have always strongly believed that the faculty who teach in the institutions of higher education in India are excellent. They have excellent credentials, high degree of research orientation and their ability and patience to teach the students is exemplary. Over the last few years, the teaching methodology has changed in the institutions of higher education from being purely pedagogy to andragogy and also synergy. However, in the post Covid-19 scenario, the major change has been that most of the teaching has to be delivered online or in the digital format. Using digital delivery is the major challenge today as teaching in the digital format has a couple of



challenges. The advantage of eye contact that the teacher always had in a classroom is now lost, hence the teacher has to go beyond her or his brief and ensure that they are able to retain the attention span of the students. Teaching has to be made interesting through this online engagement so that the student actually wants to learn and is not missing the classroom or is giving excuses such as network issues. The faculty have to learn to use new techniques and tips and tricks on how they can use several digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom and others to make their delivery of sessions interesting.

One area where faculty needs to get trained and skilled is the ability to conduct online examinations in a fool proof manner. Further, faculty needs to focus to get these platforms integrated to the educational ERP processes that most institutions follow. This will ensure that the entire process from teaching to evaluation is seamlessly transported on to a digital platform and this can make learning much more effective and enjoyable. To summarise, EdTech or digital delivery of education is here to stay, and I think it is a boon for faculty. Few years ago, people were worried that Google would replace teachers and they would become redundant. I have always firmly believed that you can replace technology with 2G, 3G, 4G, 5G, but you can never replace a Guruji. Thus, it is time for the teacher to realise that their roles have changed today and is seen more as an integrator of knowledge. They should be seen more as a person who is the clarifier and as a person who is adding value to the careers of the individuals. The role of the teacher is to facilitate the learning process, enable students to grasp what they are learning, allow them the opportunity to distil it into useful knowledge and this knowledge to be implemented in a practical manner.

**ET: You are a well-respected academician in management & business and have played an important part in spreading the footprint of the ITM Group of Institutions. Please tell us more and what differentiates your Group from other private education providers?**

**RM:** ITM has always been regarded as one of those management institutions in the country whose culture is based on innovation. Since its inception in 1991, it has always been a fore runner in the field of management education. The innovations have mainly been in the variety of specialisations and the emphasis on maximum industry interface in designing curriculum and delivering course curriculum. Further the ITM MBA curriculum of 2 years integrates a 5-month internship for all students. This obviously gives students a greater exposure to the industry and prepares them for a better career. This often results in a situation that many companies have begun to give pre-placement offers to the students. This is a testimony of the fact they have been observing the student for five months and ensuring that they settle down into the culture of the organisation that they are going to join. Besides, NGO internships which are offered in ITM for all the students makes them very grounded. It gives them an exposure to the ground realities of society that we live in and the fact that there is indeed a divide between the haves and the have-nots. As an obvious consequence, the pass-outs from ITM are more socially responsible having known of the ground realities through the exposure of the NGO project that they have done

as part of their curriculum. Yet another unique feature of ITM's MBA is the exposure to soft skills training throughout the two-year program that is offered to them. Here the curriculum focuses on developing them into expert communicators, great listeners with sufficient expertise in the areas of negotiation skills, stress management coping with an ambiguity, teamwork skills to name a few. Thus, a pass out from ITM tends to be much more job ready than colleagues from other institutions.

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*Mumbai Roti Bank, a non-profit, food rescue organization initiated by Roti Foundation, Mumbai, bridges the gap between hunger and excess food. Started in December 2017 under the able mentorship of former Director General of Police, Maharashtra, Mr. D. Sivanandhan, the organization aims to eliminate hunger, malnutrition and food wastage, many meals at a time. Help make a difference by calling +91 86555 80001 to donate food or by making a [contribution](#).*

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## We Recommend

### Two Indian Lives

- Reviewed by Jay



The two books under review offer contrasting tales that depict the best and worst of Indian acumen.

Take the story of Indra Nooyi. 'My Life in Full' tells the heroic story that epitomises the best of Indian middle class virtues, made more special by the fact that it is the narrative of a south Indian girl with no pretence of brilliance but whose plucky and optimistic temperament, joie de vivre, infinite capacity to work hard, and sheer determination to succeed, enabled her to scale heights that no Indian had done before. Indra Krishnamoorthy Nooyi's inspirational journey is a tribute to the role that her family played, from her Tatha's (grandfather) unstinted encouragement, to her father's cheerful support, and of course, her mother's mixed reinforcements (caught between social pressures of bringing up girl children, and wanting them to break barriers as well). Along the way, the Chennai girl challenged many shibboleths, and won active support from her various organisational superiors, from her first job in India onwards, to the many who gave her the right opportunities through interesting assignments in her storied career. Never one to

carp at the load, or be fazed by the unaccustomed or unfamiliar nature of the task, Indra plunged headlong into every task with refreshing gusto, a learner's mind, and gallons of energy in the most challenging of business times. Remember we are referring to the world of 70s, 80s and 90s when women in managerial roles were rare individuals, let alone an immigrant, Indian woman, driving around mid-west America tackling consulting assignments, and later, engineering challenges for Motorola & ABB, even at the cost of physical disasters (near-death accident).

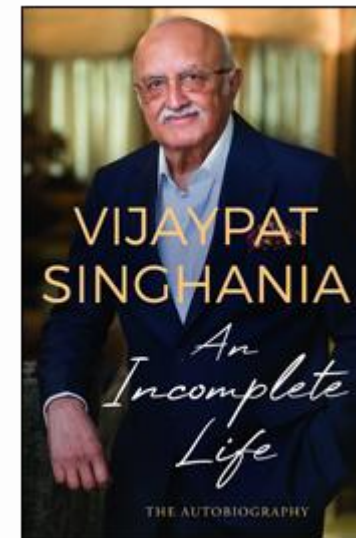
Indra went from strength to strength - not just with her husband to cheer her on, but also other family members too. The book famously relates her mother's reaction ('leave your crown in the garage') when she returned home with news of her historic elevation to the highest echelons at Pepsi, and the loads of emotional heartbreak she

felt every time when her young daughters craved her presence in the midst of a business crisis, but yet she soldiered on, rewriting the rules of corporate America, and signalling to women everywhere that their role in society is not cast in stone. The book not only gives you an inside look at how she transformed the global brand that is Pepsi, with pioneering work ('Performance with Purpose' became her strategic shift built around the objectives of Nourish, Replenish, Cherish) but also offers her radical ideas on how organizations have to become more adaptive to the needs of today's world where the principles of diversity and inclusion in the workforce are not just slogans of convenience but cornerstones for fulsome social existence. The last chapter of her rich life has not been written yet, of course, but she has ascended heights that make both the East and the West make her claim to be their own, as both sides believe that 'she is one of us!'.

From the heights of Indra's excellence to the depths of absurdity and capriciousness that is Vijaypat Singhania's 'An Incomplete Life'. Here is a cautionary story of how family business can pamper, breed arrogance, and ultimately cause degeneration of human relationships. Born with a silver (nay, golden) spoon, as a scion of the well-established and diverse business house of Singhania's, Vijaypat's book is a torturous lament of missed opportunities. He blames his genes and his environment for every mistake in his life constantly stressing that he had a rotten childhood with a negligent father (who did not know how to show love) and an evil witch (dayan) of a stepmother.

Singhania's meandering autobiography also offers a glimpse of the corruption laden business environment both under the British (when bribes could fetch knighthoods) and under the pre-liberal Indian governments when licences were cornered by influential business houses (including the JK Organization, of course). While condemning corruption, Singhania makes no bones about the fact that their family thrived using all the dirty tricks of the trade, and also benefitted with sinecures that government access offered them.

The book underplays the business acumen that Singhania undoubtedly had but does share some glimpses of the adventurous spirit that has made Vijaypat Singhania a legend amongst industrialists in India. Consider this: in 1988 he established a world record by flying solo in his microlight from UK to India, besides winning a FIA round-the-world air race in 1994. Not resting on this laurel, in 2005, at the age of 67 years, he set the world record in ballooning for highest altitude (over 69 thousand feet).



With awards galore under his belt (including the Tenzing Norgay national adventure award), Singhanian's love for aviation would have been his calling card but for the ugly turn in the last leg of his life. The book's countless episodes of poor filial relationship culminates with what Singhanian calls 'the biggest mistake of my life'. On 13th February 2015, Vijaypat Singhanian signed away 37.17% of the equity shares of Raymond to his younger son, Gautam, and thereby hangs a tale. Not much is shared as to the reasons for this step - perhaps he is being cautious given the legal battles underway.

The sins of the past - hurtful liaisons with brothers, cousins, children, his disdain for his wife, and others - all have welled up and the hasty call to handover the business and his wealth to his youngest child became the worst decision ever. Not that he is a pauper by any means, however Singhanian's plight is now of a litigant fighting to claim rights over his assets, both commercial and personal. Removed from the lap of luxury that he lived in all his life - and splurging his wealth all across the globe in his heyday - today, his wife and he are limited to a relatively small rented accommodation, fighting to save his honour and his reputation torn to shreds, with social media memes caricaturing his existence. Some may consider it his comeuppance after a life of extravagance and arrogance, but the bitter battle between father and son provides savoury grist to the tabloids. The publication of the autobiography itself was a bone of contention and needed multiple legal intervention. The poor nature of writing - the ramblings of a bitter old man - itself is a reflection of the tug-of-war between parties trying to win public relation brownie points, and indicates that better editorial support was missing.

So here we are with the contrasting sagas. Of a debauched and degenerate India of the privileged class, and an upwardly mobile meritocracy in which the dint of self-worth and accomplishment brings global recognition and greatness is thrust upon you despite humility being your calling card. Two lives juxtaposed as a tale of modern times.

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## THROUGH THE LENS



Bird watcher, **Rupesh Balsara** spots a Mute Swan which gets its name from the fact that it is less vocal than the other species of Swans. While it is a rare sighting, in recent times, it has been spotted in Jamnagar (Gujarat) and near Kolkata. They are known to feed on grains and agricultural crops. This species is distributed in Central and North Europe, Central Asia, Russia, China, and Mongolia. They winter in Southern Europe and Central Asia and are a rare visitor to Africa and the Indian Subcontinent.

## Empowered Learning Systems

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