

Gifts of God

Way back, perhaps in October 1996, the Board of Governors of IMX agreed to a suggestion of a faculty member on the Board to increase PGP intake from 120 to 180, much against the wishes of Director. The physical infrastructure was expedited and the intake was increased to 180 in July 1997.

However, the problem of faculty was also there in certain area like strategic management. There were two compulsory courses in second year, strategy formulation and strategy implementation and there were two faculty members Prof. Pathak and Prof. Bose. Prof. Pathak had relevant qualification and experience. Prof. Bose did not have any formal qualification in the area, but having experience of an entrepreneurship institute, had developed interest in the area.

Next year when the due to increase in PGP intake to 180, there became three sections of each course. Surprisingly the director decided to give 2 years leave to Prof. Bose w.e.f. July 1998. Prof. Pathak was alone. Not many faculty members were teaching more than 2-3 course-section, but looking at the requirements of the institute Prof. Pathak agreed to teach three sections of of two courses Academic Session 1998 despite the fact that unlike most others he was engaged in MDP/ FDP, research etc. attending research conferences etc. (which was being impressed by BoG time and again) which resulted in his inability to launch new elective courses.

The problem aggravated further however, because in April 1998 he was also appointed as the first Dean (Academic Affairs), much against the wishes of the Director, as the selection was done by the Board Committee. No one in the 30 years history of whole IIM system, had ever taught 6 courses in two terms. Setting up new office of Dean (AA), which had all confusions created by the Director, was itself a task.

He made efforts to get guest or visiting faculty but to no avail. However, a faculty from LBS agreed to teach half the course. But that was not enough. The evaluation load of 3 sections each in two consecutive terms difficult to complete in time. Dr. Pathak therefore redesigned the two courses by merging them into 1.5 courses (45 hrs. instead of 2 courses of 60 hrs), saving time of 9 hrs of project presentations/ concluding session (as there was to be one project and one concluding session in each class). He also deleted two topics to shift it to other elective courses on management of change and transformation. In all he was to take approximately 4 course load in one term, besides other responsibilities.

It was not easy to get approval of faculty council where some vociferous faculty members questioned reduction from two courses of sixty hrs to one course of 45 hrs. The argument that no other institution had more than one course, did not cut the ice. The inability to teach six courses by one faculty also did not find favour, as some faculty members who themselves were not doing more than 3-4 courses, maintained that the course should not be merged to accommodate convenience of a faculty member. Finally, in disgust Prof. Pathak asked the faculty council, how will the institute run the courses if he fell sick or died? There was no answer to it and merging of the course was approved.

A month and a half later, he was to present a research paper at WACRA International Conference, at Marseille, France, which was rare those days. Board's permission was required for such visits. It was only second time a faculty was going for international conference, after Prof. Pathak's last visit five years ago. The SM course was to start immediately thereafter.

However, as luck would have it, on 25th June, 1998, he met an accident. The mini bus carrying family members in a marriage party turtled upside down on highway. "I saw death in close quarter". Luckily a police van saw it rushed to nearest hospital. Twelve of fifteen persons were injured badly, including Dr. Pathak. Left hand finger was crushed and right hand scapula had a crack. There was no reservation available to return and condition was not good enough for road journey. "I was anxious and feeling shattered, little realising the designs of God".

A week later he could go to his hometown and met the orthopaedic surgeon, who said it can't be plastered but only hanging bandage can be used as elbow support. He also mentioned that recovery may take time.

The Doctor was in awe when Prof. Pathak asked the doctor whether he could go for the above conference, in that condition two days later. After a while he composed himself and enquired how would Prof. Pathak go and whether he will come in contact with crowd, to latter Prof. Pathak replied in negative. Prof. Pathak realised that though his hands could not lift load, he could walk and other than the two injuries he was by and large OK. He went to market and bought a slightly large handbag. He also realised the two injuries were at different points. Then he selected shirts with widest possible sleeves and tried to wear it with thumb and index finger of left hand. Slowly he could wear the left sleeve also because elbow was OK though scapula was having crack. He slowly packed other items in the bag, and slowly lifted the flap of the bag with right hand and put it on left shoulder. Slowly he stood up and walked. Lo, he was ready for the journey.

Doctor allowed. It was a great experience for Prof. Pathak how so many people from Lucknow to Marseille and back volunteered to give him comfort. To cut the story short, he finished his journey, got applause for transformation case, and returned, losing his specs also on the way back.

When he reached Lucknow he could not write with right hand nor could read.

How to conduct class? He did not have specs, how to prepare for the class? "Luckily my case book had been published and first few sessions had either cases from book or the ones which I had taught for over 10 years. But how to conduct class. My right hand could not move above waist. I tried left hand, but it did not work. Next day I lifted wrist of right hand with support of left hand and started writing from bottom of the Board. Then tried to lift a bit more. Every day I tried to lift a bit more and lo, within two weeks I was able to write even at top of the Board. Rest of the course could be finished easily and even the workload of Dean and part of the workload of director (whose term had expired, and not extended even by a day) could be sustained. Doctor said if I had not gathered courage to conduct the classes, recovery would have taken lot more time.

I discovered the flexibility God has provided to use *our body in an improvised manner*. God has given us so much, *but we do not realise it*. If four course load be finished in one term of 3 months, why faculty members were up in arms in 2009 against policy of teaching minimum of 120 hrs? Did they realise the almighty has gifted them with ability to take at least 16 course work load in a year, instead of 6 only. That holds us from serving the society as much as we can", he concluded.

Prof. Pathak was amused when eighteen years later, after retirement, he came to learn that as per the official records he had taught only 1 ½ course.

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