

spotlight

Present learning, FUTURE PERFECT

Teaching leadership skills is just a part of what this man does to empower rural India

DIVYA SEHGAL
DECCAN CHRONICLE

Jaikumar Chandrashekar is a busy man. He's constantly going from one meeting to another, liaising with the community and corporate world.

Having launched the Indian edition of Better Future India, a company that deals with leadership programmes, he works on instilling leadership skills.

The company is just about a year-and-a-half old, but has managed to achieve quite a bit in this small time span. "The parent company which is based in Netherlands proposed that we start something similar in India, because the country really needs improvement. So, we have three broad aspects of leadership programmes;

top level training; youth training and rural social entrepreneurship." In 2007, when Jaikumar was still in college, he got an opportunity to head to Norway for a leadership programme on social entrepreneurship. "I went there with an open mind to learn whatever I could. And I discovered that getting results is

Jaikumar Chandrashekar

LIFE LESS ORDINARY

THE STORIES OF LALITHABAI AND KATYANI ARE MORE THAN INSPIRING.

not the most important aspect in a job. It's the entire journey that matters. The programme influenced me to a large extent. I decided to pursue masters in social work, rather than the oft trodden path of MBA."

There is no stopping those who are truly interested and passionate about wanting to contribute to a country's social development. And while, Better Future India deals with more than just rural entrepreneurship, it's this that Jaikumar is most proud of. "Last year, we had 12 rural social entrepreneurs in the programme. We also started a project called *Kadam Pe Kadam* which sought to instill personal growth and business skills and in the final phase, we connected these entrepreneurs to business mentors from varied fields."

He is most proud of two specific women from the villages who went about door-to-door distributing and installing about 9,000 smokeless stoves in homes. "The stories of Lalithabai and Katyani are more than inspiring. They may be illiterate to our so-called literate world but they have created great social impact. They've even gone so far as to get sanction from the government of Karnataka for the stoves," he smiles.

Jaikumar's content with his life and is happy that he has a small part to play in the success stories of so many people. And there are many such projects in the pipeline. "We've identified 30 rural women entrepreneurs in Karnataka and Kerela. And our aim is for them to connect with each other as well. Other than that, we even have a programme which involves doctors contributing to society through personal leadership."

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Mere paas...Big B ki dictionary hai

Bhawana Somaaya's third book on Big B — a dictionary chronicles his body of work

ROHINI NAIR
DECCAN CHRONICLE

Q As this is your third book on Amitabh Bachchan, was there any sense of déjà vu?

Not at all. The fact is that all my three books on Mr Bachchan have been unplanned. The first happened because I had a lot of material on him. The second was supposed to be a part of the first, but a restriction in the number of pages made me take it out at the last minute. Since a lot of work had gone into collecting the data, I updated the manuscript and added interesting boxes. The result was *Bachchanalia. Lexicon* — my latest book — was conceived almost 10 years ago. It was a sketchy manuscript at that time and I was trying to attach it as a final chapter of *Bachchanalia*. But everybody felt it was not going with the rest of the copy so we pulled it out. I had given up on the idea itself, until a friend motivated me to revive the project.

Q You've described the cinema of Mr Bachchan as creating an alternative language almost for his fans...could you elaborate?

Hindi cinema inspires a popular culture. Amitji was fortunate to portray some dramatic characters. He's mouthed immortal lines like, "Hum jahan khade rehte hain line wahin se shuru ho jati hai."

Everybody remembers these lines.

Q Why, more than any other actor in India, do you think only Mr Bachchan has been able to create this experience across socio-cultural groups?

He has a track record of 40 years and 100 plus films. Most superstars fade away

after a decade — he went from strength to strength and reinvented himself. My nephews, my grand children have all been exposed to him. What I've done with *Lexicon* is selected 2,833 headwords of the Oxford dictionary and associated them with his films. This was possible only because of his vast body of work — and my memory.

Q Could you tell us some interesting or little known anecdotes/facts about Mr Bachchan?

I discovered that his formula films which were not really appreciated when released, are the ones that now dominate memory. It was all the absurd and crazy things, like emerging out of an egg, calling out to a dolphin or crying when parting with his taxi, that still bring a smile to our faces.

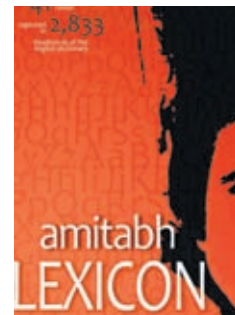
Whenever I was stuck for a scene or a dialogue, I would call up my friends for help, and they were always happy to take a nostalgic trip.

Q Could you describe the process of researching and writing this book?

Oh, it was a long and labourious process and I'm certain I would not like to go through it again. The idea had been with me for almost 11 years. After writing a summary of the concept, I never continued, because the thought of executing it was too daunting. Then my friend offered a cover design that I loved, and I began working on the manuscript like a lunatic. I first highlighted the headwords that I felt could be associated with the Big B's films. Then I wrote about the film and the scene connected to the word. It was not that simple, because just that one death scene in *Deewar* has so many associated words: Temple, bell, blood, mother, lap.

Q If you had to write about a contemporary Indian actor who you feel could have a similar impact, then who would that be?

Without a doubt, Aamir Khan.



Supporting arts for a just cause

OF PROGRESS



The India Foundation for the Arts has started a campaign "Give the arts a home," a two-year, 2 crore capital campaign, to raise funds for building a permanent home for IFA. Jerry Rao, Ex-CEO, Mphasis, Ishaat Hussain, Director, Tata Sons and one of our donors, Abhishek Poddar, Founder, Tasveer Ghar have also contributed to this. Anmol Vellani, executive director of IFA feels, "With our growing influence and visibility has grown IFA's responsibility to the arts. We need a new infrastructure to help us play a larger role." Those interested in being a part of this campaign can contact IFA for details.

Stroke