

Gift of Knowledge for Nation Building

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Introduction:

First, let me Share my Gratitude for the Opportunities received in India and the US.....

- I lost both my parents by the time I was six. My extended family provided great support.
- I focused on Education as a way out of rough patch in my early life.
- The Government of India subsidized 80% of my undergraduate education at the IIT (BHU) in India.
- In my undergraduate years, I learned the benefit of helping my classmates who were less prepared. Their pointed inquires led me to dig deeper into concepts necessary to convince them, which also benefited me.
- The J. N. Tata Scholarship made it possible to come to the US for my higher education.
- At IIT Chicago, received teaching assistantship for completing my graduate work.

Reflecting back, I have realized how lucky I was during my first 30 years of life to receive so much from so many directions. That made me think about how to give back in my later years of life.

Gift of Knowledge Project Motivation:

- During my undergraduate days, I had overlooked Essential Skills such as, Leadership, Teamwork, Time Management, Meeting Management, Decision Making, Project Management, Talent Management, etc.
- Fortunately, I learned those Essential Skills during my graduate work in the US.
- Also working in US corporate world, I saw people progressing faster with their soft skills along with technical skills.
- Importance of Essential Skills came into sharp focus 25 years ago, when I started teaching as an Adjunct Faculty globally.
- Then in May 2012, I came across an article in New York Times titled "**An Open Letter to India's Graduating Classes**". The article highlighted lack of readiness by Indian graduates overlooking Essential Skills (<https://nyti.ms/2Eii31F>).
- Over the last 15 years of teaching in India, I came across brilliant students, however, they overlook Essential Skills, that can hold them back.

- According to The World Bank data, the Indian Youth Unemployment rate for age group 15-24 years was at **10.54% in 2017, a huge challenge for the education system** (<https://bit.ly/2IYGUpW>).
- I came across an article by India Today in July 2016 and updated in February 2018 that mentions **1.5 Million engineers graduate** annually, but only **7 per cent of them are employable. What a shocking statistic!** (<https://bit.ly/2Hbd5d>).
- In February 2014, I wrote a blog on **"State of Higher Ed in India: Time to Act is Now"**. (<https://bit.ly/2PyWV8Q>).
- According to Nelson Mandela, **"Education is the Most Powerful Weapon which you can use to Change the World"**. We need this focus for improving India's Education System.

Gift of Knowledge Project:

- Looking at the education landscape in India, I conceptualized, designed, developed, and delivered a **Leadership Excellence Series (LES)** program with a major focus on **Essential Skills**.
- In 2013, we used WebEx platform to impart Essential Skills (Soft Skills and Business Excellence Knowledge) in 12 monthly sessions to quality professionals in India.
- In 2014, we used Google Hangouts to engage IIT (BHU) students, we started the LES. Based on positive response, we expanded our project to other colleges and universities in India. See the 18 member LES Team including 12 members (last 2 rows) from IIT (BHU), Varanasi.



- From 2014 to 2016, we scaled up this project to serve **50 Educational Institutes in 14 States of India, reaching 675,000 people** (<https://asq.org.in/leadership-excellence-series/>).
- In March 2016, I gave **"Effective Time Management"** talk at the BISAG Studio in Gandhinagar. Via satellite we connected to **450 colleges** in Gujarat reaching to **500,000 students** (https://youtu.be/z_fvgG8uwus).

- In 2016, developed **Essential Skills Curriculum** for a new University in Alexandria, Egypt with a focus on seven essential skills as shown on a slide below. The Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education approved the proposal for deployment when the university starts its operation.



- Going forward, in 2017 started a new initiative of **Career Development** talks to students and professionals with a **Focus on Planning, Focus on Strengths, and Focus on Soft Skills** reaching out to **3,700 people** in India and US in 30 sessions.

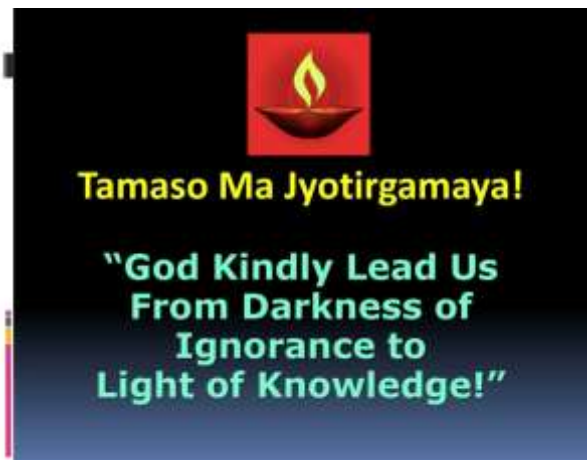
Key Takeaways from the Gift of Knowledge Idea:

- The gift of knowledge using technology is an innovative and no-cost solution to educate youth and professionals in India on a massive scale.
- The Gift of Knowledge project can serve as a motivator for successful alumni from Indian Educational Institutes to freely give back their knowledge and time for Nation Building.
- The Administrations of Indian Educational Institutes of National Importance should be pro-active and supportive of innovative initiatives to benefit their student community.
- AICTE which provides oversight for all higher education curricula in India, should incorporate Essential Skills in educational curricula.
- **"When we Share Knowledge, it Multiplies. When we Hide Knowledge, it Dies".**

Integral to Essential Skills, let me Share my "Gift of Vision" Community Service Project:

- In 1959, I had met with an accident playing with firecrackers during the festival of light celebrations. One of the firecrackers did not go off. When I put a puff of air, that firecracker did explode in my face, and I lost my eyesight. During that darkness, I pondered about my future without eyesight. Luckily, with help from an eye doctor, I regained my eyesight after 24 hours.
- That incident in 1959 left an indelible impression on me about the plight of blind people. The God planted a seed which would germinate 30 years later, when in 1989, the Blind Foundation for India (BFI) was established.
- Learning from Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's ideals at IIT (BHU) to serve the Society, in 1989 I focused on massive issue of blindness in India by establishing **Blind Foundation for India, USA**. *The Mission of the Blind Foundation is to prevent and cure blindness, and educate and rehabilitate permanently blind people in India* (<http://www.blindfoundation.org>).

- Through Blind Foundation we have raised **\$4 Million**, performed **200,000 free Cataract** operations, donated **128 mobile vans** for transport of doctors and patients, distributed **10,000 Braille Kits** for education of blind children, and helped **1.9 million adults and children** with their free eyesight checkups (See my **TEDxIIT Chicago Talk**: <https://youtu.be/Z-fmkivYcVq>).
- *The Indian youth should identify a cause near to their heart, and then serve the Society through Community Service.*
- **"God Kindly Lead us from Darkness of Ignorance to Light of Knowledge". This is true for both Education and Eye Care projects.**



In Closing:

- I am delighted to share the impact of two Connected Giving Back Projects - *Free Gyan Daan* and *Free Chakshu Daan* as shown in the slide below.

GIVING BACK IMPACT (1989-PRESENT)	
Free Gyan Daan (2013-Present)	Results
# of People Benefited	675,000
Free Chakshu Daan (1989-Present)	Results
# of Adults and Children Eyesight Checkups	1,900,000

- So, my humble request is to think about giving back your knowledge, time, and wealth to help in Nation Building. ***After all, no one has figured out, how to take their knowledge or wealth with them, when they depart from this world!***

