GUEST COLUMN | VIKRAM SAMPATH

"SPJIMR EMPOWERED ME WITH AN ANALYTICAL MIND"

MUMBAI-BASED SPJIMR IS AMONG THE FEW INSTITUTES THAT INVEST TIME AND ENERGY TO MAKE THE CONCEPT OF BEING SENSITIVE TO SOCIETY A REGULAR PART OF THEIR PEDAGOGY

I look back on my time at the S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR) with a lot of gratitude. Those were some of the best days of my life, if I can borrow lines from the Bryan Adams song. I had just completed the five-year engineering course at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani, and the SPJIMR was a completely new experience. That it was located in Mumbai made a significant difference.

Right from the word go, the pedagogy was different. Before we even joined, we were given a lot of pre-course work materials. The day we reached, there was a test to welcome us. It was quite obvious that we had to come prepared. There was no time to settle down. For those who came from science and engineering backgrounds, the pre-course materials had subjects such as economics, which we had never studied before. The students from the arts were not conversant with subjects such as mathematics and statistics. Students had to study the course materials by themselves and then appear for the test. While it seemed extremely excessive—a test on the first day—but so much thought was put into the exercise that it prepared us for the rigours of the next two years at the SPJIMR. However, the faculty were ready to do a little bit of hand-holding to create a level-playing field for students coming from diverse educational backgrounds.

I don't know how it is now, but during my time, the SPJIMR was the only institute offering specialisation (The IIMs offered only general management courses). I specialised in finance. Being in Mumbai was an advantage, as it is the financial capital of India. Most of the industry captains came as guest lecturers. Some of our courses were taken by them. There used to be CEO lecture series. Over time, these concepts, such as specialisation, have been adopted by other B-schools too.

The SPJIMR also pioneered another novel idea called the Assessment and Development of Managerial and Administrative Potential (ADMAP). The students were divided into groups that managed everything—admissions, placements, development of college infrastructure, formation of hostel committees, cultural committees. Each group had one faculty in-charge. ADMAP helped us get a hands-on training in management, administration, and crisis handling. The onus of running an institute of that scale was on the students. Of course, I was in a more benign committee—the cultural committee—which was about putting together events. But even in doing so, there had been so many crises that we could not anticipate initially. We

WHERE IS THE BEST VALUE FOR MONEY?

How different categories of B-schools fare in terms of return on the money spent as course fee

CATEGORY OF B-SCHOOLS	AVERAGE ROI
TOP 1-25	1.36
TOP 26-50	1.05
TOP 51-75	0.89
TOP 76-100	0.90

Note: ROI (return on investment) is calculated by dividing average domestic annual salary with fees for the entire course

GOVERNMENT VS PRIVATE

(Among top-100 B-schools)

CATEGORY OF B-SCHOOLS	AVERAGE ROI
GOVERNMENT	1.70
PRIVATE	0.90

CITY-WISE

(Among top-100 B-schools)

Mumbai business schools offer the best value for money

CATEGORY OF B-SCHOOLS	AVERAGE ROI
DELHI NCR	1.18
MUMBAI	1.36
BENGALURU	0.89

had to be on our toes all the time and find solutions. It gives good training on how to face life itself because it's never a straight and even path. There are so many ups and downs.

In the first year, we also had a week-long camp called *Gita Shivir*. We were taken to an ashram in Vadodara run by a renowned Swamiji, who gave us a lot of deep insights into the teachings of the Gita, which is a great tool for management students and leaders. It was a unique experience—staying in a rural environment on the outskirts of Vadodara and listening to the lessons of Swamiji under the open sky, something a B-school student is unlikely to experience. Later in my life, the meditation lesson learnt at the *Gita Shivir* helped me keep my composure when faced with unwarranted public attacks by so-called intellectuals, as I, in my avatar as a historian, did not conform to their narratives. And the ADMAP training helps me stand in good stead in every crisis.

At the end of the first year, we were introduced to a unique concept called Development of Corporate Citizenship (DoCC). We all had to do a two-month-long internship with an NGO to understand the social needs, how the unstructured environment functions and to help the NGO structure its work by sharing with it some managerial concepts that we had learnt as part of our pedagogy.

I joined Bengaluru-based Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, which was started by Swati Ramanathan and Ramesh Ramanathan in 2001. It felt nice to help them with a lot of course material for the civic training they were conducting in schools. At that time, it may have sounded irrelevant to me—as most students think of what they are taught—but in the hindsight, I can say that it actually helped me shape up as a mature individual and face different challenges of life.

In the first year, we were exposed to all branches of management and in the second year, we specialised in our major. We also had to take a minor, and I went for information management. The course ended with a two-month internship. I did mine at GE Capital, and got a job there.

The training at BITS Pilani and SPJIMR empowered me with an analytical bent of mind that keeps me in good stead, especially while following a discipline such as history that I eventually branched out to. This analytical way of looking at information helps me structure it better for my research. But more importantly, the SPJIMR made me socially responsible. Very few institutes invest time and energy to make the concept of being sensitive to society a regular part of their pedagogy. The SPJIMR does, and it makes an indelible positive mark on young minds, growing up to become conscious citizens of this country. ■

The writer is a historian and author of eight books. His latest book is Bravehearts of Bharat: Vignettes from Indian History. *He graduated from SPJIMR in 2005*