

MY SUCCESS STORT-SONY GOYAL



I am Sony Goyal Registration Number of CFP/159/97 and Degree Registration Number GFT/2561/2001, a student of Department of Food Engineering and Technology, SLIET, Longowal.

Before writing my story, a big thanks to all my teachers of Department of Food Engineering and Technology and all other departments who kept me focused on the important things in life like hard work, disciplined life and helping society.

I fell in love with SLIET the day entered this Vast campus for first time; I was here to meet my cousin, who was already studying here. It was love at first site; I just wanted to be here. It was 14th Sept 1997 when I officially entered SLIET in Certificate programme in Food Processing and Preservation.. Despite having AI Rank 4, I opted for Food Tech leaving aside Electronics and Computers, which surprised many. Rightly said Love is blind; I even left Thapar Institute to get into SLIET. These are two decisions that really shaped my life. It was first class of mathematics, where I felt good as being good at mathematics; I always loved Mathematics Classes, though learning was highest for us in Communications Classes. I remember the communication professor feeling frustrated when we wrote “Childerns” in one of the assignments, but that is how you learn, yes you learn by making mistakes. I owe SLIET a lot as it provided me space to make mistakes, mistakes that finally were the life lessons. I would love to share few Moments/Incidents that can be called as milestones in my Journey. First one is our freshers, where I first time in my life did some stage event, and even got into final 6 for Mr. Fresher. On asking what I want to be in my next life I answered “ I want to be student of SLIET”. This Answer created a special space for me in heart of our Director, Dr. R.C. Chauhan, with whom later I spent good time doing photography and capturing few migratory Birds at Lake. Next Big Opportunity was given where on Environment Day, we did poster presentation and won prize for First time. That installed a zeal of doing something different and 7 years passed in all these ups and downs, while getting 300+ certificates in Extracurricular activities including Techfest, Sports meets, getting silver Medal in Academics in Certificate and Diploma, Heading various Committees like SOFT, SLS, Book Club etc.

And the last thing that changed everything for me to a different scale, taking me where I am today was guest lecture by CEO of Vardhman Group Mr. Sachit Jain, Arranged by Prof. P.K .Jain, where I get to know about IIM Ahmedabad and who knew that I was destined to go to that place. Faculty at Department supported a lot during preparation giving special permissions and supporting the mission of IIMA.

It took almost a year of hard work and devotion to make dream come true. I finally entered the IIMA on 2nd June 2004. A young first year student at IIM Ahmedabad gets attracted to a Volunteer ship organized by seniors to teach underprivileged kids in the vicinity of campus under a project named ‘Prayaas’. This call was not easy to take for a then Academic oriented student, as it was near the 3rd term examinations when I was again in a race to convert the Silver medal into a Golden

one. But it was 'Prayaas' which changed my focus from just academics to something more meaningful. I never knew, that this one act would change my entire objective, philosophy and purpose of life. With each evening I spent with kids, I started getting more and more engrossed in the activities of Prayaas and took keen interest in lives of the Slum Dwellers.

I went on to search the answer to some puzzling questions like on one side of the wall how these families manage livelihood in Just Rs10 per day, buying everything in it – sugar, vegetable, spices, flour etc. whereas the brightest minds of country on the other side of the wall of The Well Known Institute of Management in Western India (WIMWI) are Fighting neck to neck to grab a placement package to the tune of Rs.10 lakhs and above. Though I hardly had any exposure to various systems like communism, socialism, capitalism etc. back then, but I could very well relate all of this to the discussions I had in my village with my grandfather about the inequality in society and role of education.

I was born in a small village, did basic schooling there, and there was hardly any guidance available there to decide on future also the resource was scarce to afford Higher education. Only after joining Food Engineering and Technology at SLIET Longowal, I got to know there are some institutes for Engineering known as IITs as well. Then I was known for being a nerd guy, one of those intelligent people who were always at the top when it comes to academics, especially Mathematics. A disciplined guy who knew that he is the best when it comes to studying. But when it was time to dream about IIM A, at first I too doubted myself being from non-convent education background, until I heard Mr. Asit Ghosh saying – “Karne Se Hi Hoga” (It can be achieved only by working on it) in one of the Motivational Seminars. For a small town guy, walking onto the floors of IIM A was nothing less than a dream. I was already a role model in my community, where it meant a lot to convert IIM and that too IIM Ahmedabad.

As I belong to a humble background, coming to IIMs from a village in Punjab was life time achievement for me. But the survival at IIMs is not easy either as you encounter students from best of the IIT's and other top graduation colleges making it easily. Given their wide exposure I felt a need to upgrade my skills in every domain I could and didn't want to miss anything at this place. So I took part enthusiastically in almost everything. With this enthusiasm I became the CR of class although I was Fresher, Naïve, and Youngest in the class. I could manage a Decent CG (Grades) in first two terms, managing overall 2nd position in class so far. By end of third term I was in LOVE with Prayaas and people there, but I could not foresee that life had all together different plans for me.

The next one year at IIM A till the graduation day was dedicated towards making Prayaas a well-organized and social initiative of IIM A. I was quite instrumental in efforts which resulted in shifting the teaching place from a temple to a nearby government school in off hours and then to 4 rooms inside the four Walls of IIM A. I also coordinated with various established NGOs to make it more sustainable. I dedicated the subjects of 2nd year to study the prevailing situation from different angles. I even took all my final year projects relating to questions and challenges I faced during establishing Prayaas @IIM Campus, making it integral part of IIMA. Though not very clear about what can be done, I was getting closer to the root cause and the solution to the problem, 'Education'. Prof. Anil Gupta played a major role in giving shape to the ideas, in fact a mission.

In Final year on request of my friend I taught at TIME Institute as part time faculty, which initially was aimed at getting few bucks to enjoy life in better style as I do not wanted to waste the hard earned money of my parents on drinks and fine dining's, but later this coaching became a part of my plan as I thought it would be enough to make livelihood with least time input and nil investment.

With a dream of Universalization of Education in India, I decided to deny the placement offer by the Godrej and wanted to go full time into Social Entrepreneurship ignoring the requirements of livelihood. Family could smell my intentions but could not think of a solution for the same as they could not figure out the reason, Except one - that I might be influenced from my grandfather, who despite graduating in 1935 from College of Lahore University, Nabha, Punjab preferred to do small business in village denying cozy Jobs offers.

It was my two and half year stint with Godrej Group, where I got 2 promotions and increase in salary making a belief about my abilities firmer. There is one more important point that I learned in

those days. “When you earn, you can plan how and where to spend”. This has given me not only financial freedom but also a greater self-belief about being worth of your ideas as IIM graduates earn much higher than the society average. This time I also realized it is good to be from rural or semi urban area to manage businesses successfully. The very basic struggle of life and day to day struggle in rural India exposes you to numerous live case studies of management which very well supplement “*what they teach you at IIMs*”. But that’s not what it takes to get into IIMs, for that there is a different criteria, which I realized that usually the students from semi urban and rural India are not even aware of. Also, another factor which drags them back is the inferiority complex, though they are more capable at handling practical situations. Then the idea of Super 30 excited me and I dreamt as if I could do something similar in case of CAT coaching for getting into IIMs.

During My Stint with Godrej at Ajmer, I was in constant touch with activities of Prayaas at IIM and helped in smooth handover from one batch to next while ensuring functioning of same without me. If I Put it in “Management” perspective, a project need to be system driven rather than person. During this period I visited many higher educational institutions like IITs, Symbiosis and State Universities to make youth aware about need of social entrepreneurship and helped in ideating projects Similar to Prayaas at their own campus without having any stakes in that as I wanted the Prayaas to grow as an idea and not as an organization.

In this short span of 2 years I was able to fulfill all the basic necessities like Car, new Home, marriage of sister and my own marriage of course. I shared my plans with my wife who without any objection agreed to and stood with me in thick and thin. Just a month before my wife was expecting our first baby, I decided to quit the job and pursue my dreams. For few of my friends cum advisers, at best it was a tough challenge at that crucial time but for most of the rest it was sheer madness. For Sony Goyal, it was really Madness, a madness to do something more worthy than just selling goods and over and above love with an idea whose seed was germinated few years back.

Idea of Social Entrepreneurship was good but you need some livelihood as my best friend Vijay suggested to go for coaching (which I had done before as well) along with Prayaas. I preferred to start coaching students from Rural and Semi urban areas with a dream to help students get into IIMs and other Good B-schools from the region, as I being one from the region to do so. The Project emerged as Mission CAT “Bathinda to IIMs”. When everyone around used to mock me for my decision of leaving the high paying job, I used to tell them about the Social Entrepreneurship, the need to do something more meaningful, the passion of fulfilling ones dreams, the Confidence I gained while in Job and the IIMA Degree being best insurance policy to experiment with your ideas.

With an idea of self-discipline at the core, I went on to coach students for cracking CAT. From one to five to 10 to 20 and so on....with a year on year growth, 42 students last year from Malwa region made it to the big B-schools of the country. Now, what if Sony Goyal, the State Manager of Godrej had not left his job, today that region wouldn’t have the courage to dream of going to the most coveted IIM’s. The day is not far when 100 out of 100 shall make into IIMs. That shall mark realization of dream one and start of a more maverick dream. I along with the coaching started a school for underprivileged children in Bathinda, named it Prayaas International School. The Prayaas International, after facing its share of teething problems, is now providing full time education to 200 plus students and affiliated with Punjab School Education Board. Prayaas volunteers work with Government on various projects in field of education. Prayaas dreams India one day achieving Universal Education, where every child has right and access to Quality Education irrespective of his social or economic Status. My wife takes care of the project Prayaas with a dream that a child from Prayaas will one day make it to IIMA to complete one cycle and to break another.

Dreams come true only for those who dare to dream: SoGo

