

**BITS**

# ECHO



**BITS Pilani**  
Pilani | Dubai | Goa | Hyderabad

**PILANI | DUBAI | GOA | HYDERABAD**

**VOLUME : 4 || ISSUE : 3**

---

## **Anecdote OF BITSIAN STORYTELLERS**

---



# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>EDITORIAL MESSAGES</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>COVER STORY</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>ALUMNI SUCCESS STORY</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>ALUMNI SPEAK</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>BEACONS OF INSPIRATION</b>	<b>11</b>

**Disclaimer : The information contained in this publication is sourced from alumni and reflects their views and opinions, and not of the institute**





Dear BITSians,

Just when the campus had achieved a semblance of normalcy and we were mulling getting students back on the campus, the number of cases across India have soared. Pilani, thankfully, is still a haven, an oasis that you all fondly remember in your memories.

You would be happy to note that we have expanded our wings to Mumbai, adding to our 4 campuses, with the BITS School of Management (BITSoM), a business school for tomorrow's leaders in the business capital of India.

Collaboration and knowledge sharing score very high on the various methods by which alumni like to engage with their alma mater - high praise for the BITSAA Silicon Valley Chapter for launching BITSAA Propel, a formal series of lectures delivered by expert BITSians from industry and academia. Lecture series on AI & ML and Data Analytics have already begun, and many more subject series are in the pipeline. I have also followed the impact the BITSAA Alumni Mentoring Program was

able to create in its first edition itself, and I am very sure that is an unmet need that the alumni can fulfil, without large time commitments. I trust Alumni Relations Office along with BITSAA International, would bring many short-and-long term opportunities for interested and enthusiastic alumni to interface with the students and faculty on campus.

It's pretty impressive and enjoyable to read this particular issue focusing on BITSians who write. Off-late, a lot of engineering graduates have broken the literature and liberal arts bastion, thanks to a lot of engineering institutions who are now focusing on "exposure" to liberal arts, along with Sciences and Engineering. It fills me with pride that BITS has been a pioneer in preparing technocrats and scientists with a great liberal arts curriculum, much more than just exposure to liberal arts, since decades. No wonder Public Administration, Bhagwad Gita, and Appreciation of Mahatma Gandhi's Life are amongst some of the highly popular courses on the campus. But the deep interest is undoubtedly developed in clubs and association – Books, Ragamalika, Drama, Photog, English Press, A/V, Cultural/Tech Fests, Poetry and many more. I sincerely hope to welcome reunion batches on the campus later this year. Stay safe and let's keep walking.

**Prof. Souvik Bhattacharya**  
Vice Chancellor



Fifteenth issue of BITS Echo is special in many ways. It brings a coverage on inspirational BITSians who have taken a distinct path of being Writers, Travelers, Producers and innovators. BITS Echo is a magazine that alumni look forward to knowing about their fellow BITSians and the institute. Journey that we started more than three and a half years back in connecting and engaging with Alumni has unfolded in multiple ways as evident from the overwhelming response of Alumni, BITSAA International and BITSAA Chapters. The new challenges that have arisen as an outcome of pandemic have created new opportunities to virtually strengthen the BITSian community by deriving advantages which we never thought of earlier.

You will be happy to know that BITSoM, a business school for tomorrow's global leaders is a new addition in our family to engage with Alumni. One of the greatest strengths that BITS has is BITSian driven ventures that have crossed 7000 and the budding entrepreneurs in their initial phase of journey are guided, mentored and funded by seasoned BITSian entrepreneurs. I am happy to share that in the last around a year more than 28 ventures raised funding, of which 17 raised more

than \$700 M; reflecting upon the BITSians entrepreneurial zeal that is responding to the challenges faced amidst pandemic. We shall keep looking forward to Alumni support to lift this institution to pinnacle heights. Stay safe and stay healthy.

**Arya Kumar**  
Dean Alumni Relations



The last year has been unprecedented and has completely changed the way we interact with each other. There have been significant challenges faced by BITSian students and alumni across the world because of the Covid pandemic. Here, I would like to also explore the silver lining created by the pandemic. The BITSAA Silicon Valley Chapter (BITSAA SVC) has been able to explore new ways to connect with the Bay Area BITS alumni and the alma mater. Virtual events have accelerated the ways we have increased outreach to the world-wide alumni community and the students on campus as well.

Since the beginning of the pandemic and the shut-downs created by the health scare, we have quickly adapted to keeping engagement alive with the alumni community. These have included moving from a in-person meeting format a few times a year prior to 2020, to having more virtual connections focusing on helping alumni improve their career skills, personal branding and career opportunities last year. We have also been able to have a much stronger connection with students on campus and alumni in India through our career fair and startup pitch events.

The virtual format has also been a great propeller for increasing the contributions from the Silicon Valley alumni community to the students on campus. BITSAA SVC along with BITSAA International, has spearheaded the involvement of alumni as mentors, guest lecturers and advisors for multiple courses on BITS campuses. These have included the New Venture Creation class in the first and second semester of the 2020-2021 academic year and the piloting of the BITSAA Propel lecture series by alumni and non-alumni experts in the industry on the topics of AI/ML with the Computer Science Departments across all BITS campuses and Business Analytics with the Department of Management at the Pilani campus.

I am immensely grateful to the alumni community here in Silicon Valley and the rest of the world for always being willing to step in and offer their time and expertise in ways, small and large, whether it is hiring BITSians, mentoring the younger generations of BITSians or donating money to help the local or campus communities. I believe this bond is what makes our alumni community unique and powerful and as the world gets back to a new normal, I hope these interactions only strengthen with time and propel all BITSians across the world to new heights.

**Sharmila Ravula**  
CEO and President, BITSAA SVC

# Anecdote of BITSian Storytellers

## BITSians in Literature

**W**riting is a creative task and an amalgamation of imagination and words. For a writer, there is no greater joy than finish writing a book, getting it published and seeing it on the bookshelves of the book stores. However, the literary journey is either very tedious or filled with hurdles, but with the right advice, anyone can reach their goals and ambition. In the latest edition of BITS Echo, famous BITSian authors have shared their journey of becoming writers, their inspiration for writing and shared a piece of advice to help aspiring writers fulfil their dreams of becoming authors.



## Method to Madness When an Engineer Writes

*Having spent 10 years in the corporate sector including Hindustan Lever, **Anuradha Gupta** (Pilani, '90) took a sabbatical from work and pursued her passion for writing. Her literary experiences encompass a wide range of genres, which include poetry and humorous articles. She discusses her journey as a writer, her motivation to keep writing and the role played by BITS in her successful writing career.*

Writing was always a hobby, a creative and cathartic journey that started from stories and went up to poetry. Writing is a medium to express what I believe in. I published a few books when I was at home with my kids. Some of them included, 'Green Dragon' a book for teens, with a

message to be mindful of environmental sustainability. Then there was 'The Memoirs of an Army Brat', a limited-edition book on my life as an army child. I also wrote a book about mental health with Jacaranda as my agent under a pseudonym while penning short stories for the Chicken Soup series.

Writing is a large part of what I do, but not my only profession. I work as an Ayurvedic practitioner and have my therapeutic practice, Ayurvedic Footprints. I am a freelance copywriter for Kerala Ayurveda, Art of Living, and Sri Sri Tattva, the USA generating articles on Ayurveda for their blogs and churning out social media content. I love the synergy of my profession, of combining this ancient knowledge with creativity to assist people in their journey towards healing.

My time at BITS fueled my creativity, freedom of expression and gave me new ways of thinking and problem-solving. It lent a rich perspective of life, and, above all, it gave me a scientific temperament and a sense of logic and reasoning which combines well in channeling and structuring creativity. When the left and right brain work together, we are in a state of balance and it increases the quality of our output. Imagine a creative frenzy taking over and you still have to structure your thoughts! In Ayurveda writing, I'm always mindful to add empirical evidence, clinical studies and scientific research to experiential knowledge and that strength from BITS background lends my work credibility. Whatever field I am in, I am incredibly fortunate and proud to be a BITS Alumni.



# Metamorphosis: Engineer to an Author

**L. Suresh** (Pilani, '92) has worked as an IT Professional, copywriter, creative director, mentor and a columnist before finally commencing his journey as a fiction and non-fiction author. His work includes two non-fiction books titled 'Touching Lives' and 'Schools Into Smiles'. His first fiction novel, titled 'The Pilani Pilgrims', was released in 2014. He is also a columnist and has written for newspapers, such as *The New Indian Express* and *The Hindu*, and for magazines, like *Afaqs*, *Books & More*, *Ashwarttha* and *Swagat*. He discusses his journey from an engineer to a writer, and the role that BITS played in his journey as a writer.



I started writing when I was in high school, and a corner of my mind was always reserved for a mood board that had various dreams and aspirations pinned to it. I had aspirations of becoming an author, writing books, and having my name published in the news papers. Fortunately, all my dreams have come true. Engineers becoming writers is what the current norm is, and, in my case, my journey from point A to point B wasn't straight. I got into CAD-CAM, then dived in advertising, dipped my feet in journalism, and somewhere along the way, I became a writer. In hindsight, I'm glad the route map was all mixed up because it gave me insights, which helped me gain a perspective as a budding writer.

Being young and foolish helps. When my wingies and batchmates were preparing for good grades, and an MS degree from a foreign university, I spent my time in the press, learning typesetting, pagination, proofing, and the raw nuances of publishing that would serve me in the good stead later. I voluntarily took up all the writing responsibilities on the campus, beginning with the English Press Club, the Oasis Press Club, and the students' magazine, *Sandpaper*. I also served as the editor of my Association Magazine. Whatever spare time I had, I devoted on writing short stories and plots for the books.

As strange as it may sound, it took India's finest science and technology institute and an engineering degree to bring out the writer in me. I would like to caution upcoming writers that it's a crowded place out there, with more writers than readers. So one should always have a plan B ready, in case things don't go well. Also, don't let go of your job to hold a pen; try to balance it out. And lastly, remember that writing rarely pays. So write for fun, write for passion, but never for money.

## When The Internet Was Kind..

**Ramya Sethuraman** (Pilani, '00) is a Product Manager at Facebook. After graduating from BITS Pilani, she pursued Masters in Computer Science from a university in Lexington, Kentucky, US. Through her work and talks, she inspires the next generation of Product Managers to create products and perform their best while at work. She is the author of a children's book series: 'Radhika's Homework Fairy', 'Malathy and Fairy Bot', 'Radhika and the Happy Bot' and two other books for adults: 'The Last Laugh' and 'Return 2 India Dreams: For here or to go?'. She shares what inspired her to take up writing while taking up various professional roles.



The writing bug bit me when I shifted to the US for graduate study. I felt that each day was stretching my mind to its limit. I wasn't mentally prepared to live independently in a new country. It was then that I discovered blogspot.com and started writing down my reflections on the day-to-day life in Kentucky as a student. The reader community back then was warm, accepting and cared about what I wrote. The constant encouragement from them and my husband gave me the confidence to write more, and so I started dabbling in short stories. The internet was kind back then in the early 2000s. My short stories were published in DNA-Me magazine in Bombay and the India Abroad newspaper in the US. I also received a special mention in the 76th Annual Writer's Digest Competition.

I loved playing with words and creating special stories from ordinary day-to-day moments. After writing blogs for some time, I decided to publish a collection of short stories called 'The Last Laugh.' Some characters and stories I wrote in 'The Last Laugh' were scenes that would play in my head as I drove to work or beckon me from my past. Sometimes they were inspired from experiences, I have seen play out for the people around me. Writing 'The Last Laugh' was a very enriching experience for me. Later on, I wrote a book about the Indian immigrant dilemma living in the US with 2 of my friends. Recently, I've been writing a children's book series imagining a world where girls build and play with robots in the future. I hope such books help little girls see themselves as builders and imagine themselves diving fearlessly into science and technology.

'Star girl' by Jerry Spinelli, 'The Little House' book series by Laura Ingalls Wilder, 'The Happiness Hypothesis' by Jonathan Haidt, 'Anything' by Scott Adams, 'Managing Oneself' by Peter Drucker, 'How will you measure your life' by Clayton Christensen and 'Anything' by Gretchen Rubin - are some of my go-to books.

# Read, Rewrite & Repeat

**Shashi Warriar** (Pilani, '81), started his career as an economist and a software specialist. He began writing in 1994 and his debut novel was 'The Hidden Continent'. Other books include, *The Pillow Talk Movies*, *The Hangman's Journal*, *Sara*, *Night of the Krait*, *The Girl Who Didn't Give Up*, and *Noordin's Gift*. Other than writing novels, he regularly writes a column for 'The Deccan Chronicle', an English newspaper. Here he talks about how he took to writing and gives advice to the young BITSians who wish to pursue their careers in writing.



I was at my parents' house in their village in Kerala. From across the verandah, one could clearly see the road to the hill that rose sharply past the canal. The first few hundred feet of the rise were green and further up one

could see that the upper half was mostly granite. The rain cut channels in the rock and the green shone with the raindrops on it. I sat on the verandah looking at the hill with a typewriter on the table in front of me. I typed one sentence, and then another, and, by the end of the day, had half a story, a fairy tale. The rest of the story worked itself out of my head over the next couple of days and I sent it to Penguin, who agreed to publish it, if I wrote another story of the same size because the one I'd written was too short to be in a book by itself.

That second story followed in a month and that was how I got bitten by the writing bug because writing stories seemed more worthwhile than anything else I'd done before. For anybody who wishes to make their career in the field of writing, the two most important things to do are reading and rewriting. You have to read because it gives you context and background, no matter what you write. Rewriting forces you to reread what you've written, again and again. While this might not seem important, it is, because, the perception of the writer on what he's written changes when you reread it carefully in the cold light of the morning. So read a lot and hack away at your work.

## Writer's Block

# What's That?

**Dilip D'Souza** (Pilani, '82) is a Mumbai-based writer and journalist who writes about political and social causes. He has written columns for *Mint*, *Caravan*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Hindustan Times* and other publications, and has won several awards for his writing. Some of his books are: *The Deoliwallahs: The True Story of the 1962 Chinese-Indian Internment*, *Final Test: Exit Sachin Tendulkar*, *The Curious Case of Binayak Sen*, *Roadrunner: An Indian Quest in America*, *The Narmada Dammed: An Inquiry into the Politics of Development*, *Branded by Law: Looking at India's Denotified Tribes*. He shares his journey of becoming a writer, his source of inspiration and how he deals with a writer's block.



I studied EEE at BITS and CS at Brown University. After working in software for some years, I tried my hand at writing. To be honest, it seemed logical because my engineering and CS training seemed to me to be perfect for my writing. It has shaped my writing; right from a first light humour

piece in a Bombay paper, through hundreds of columns and now eight books. I write about politics, society, sports, travel, and mathematics. And while I greatly enjoyed writing software, writing as I do now has opened my eyes and imagination in unexpected and welcoming ways.

My constant source of inspiration has been books, situations, and people. For example, I think of the two young engineers I once met in rural Maharashtra - a year or two out of a Kerala engineering college, like I once was, out of a Rajasthan college.

They were building a micro hydel project - a dam across a small river, feeding the water to a tank and then a turbine and generator. One morning about 15 years ago, they flipped a switch, and for the first time ever - ever! - 300 families in that small village had electricity. I mean, even telling the story in this sketchy way gives me goose pimples. How could something like this not inspire me? And over the years, I've run into a number of stories. Really, and again, how could they not inspire me?

Talking about writer's block, well, I've never really experienced one. Sure there were times when writing is slow, but that's okay. When I sit down to write, I seldom spend time agonizing over what my first few sentences will be. I just put down something and that gets me going. After all, I can always go back and change those sentences. I'd even suggest this as a cure for writer's block: just write. Anything. The simple act of writing something gets the juices flowing and then you're up and running.

# A Budding Writer From The Dubai Campus

## The Gen-Z Writer



**Lalitha Natraj** (Dubai, '20) is the author of the *Imperial Jewels* series, the first two books of which, *Sapphire Search* and *Diamond Discovery* have been published. She is a student at Carnegie Mellon University, pursuing a master's degree in Artificial Intelligence and Innovation.

### What is the inspiration behind your writing?

With the *Imperial Jewels* series, I wanted to write about characters who have complex internal monologues. The conversations we have with ourselves define who we are. If we are not honest in these conversations, we deny ourselves the privilege of progress. The raw, and oftentimes, heavy introspection that my characters undergo might seem incongruous to the otherwise colorful world of middle-grade fiction. But, I think that the middle graders have a richer emotional and intellectual capacity than we give them credit for. That is what drove me to write these stories and although they are set in medieval times, I believe that the modern-day middle-grader will resonate with the timelessness of self-reflection.

### What would you say is your interesting writing quirk?

I like to sketch some scenes that I write and explore the story from a different creative lens.

### Most challenging issues in writing?

The wonderful thing about writing is that the more you write the better you get at it. With that, however, comes a constant need to revise, what you have written before. At some point, you need to move forward, but it is difficult to identify when to let go and stop chasing the mirage of perfection.

### If you had the chance to start over again, what would you do differently?

There are things that I would do differently now than before, but I wouldn't change what I did before. Everything that I did before that elicits a cringe from me now, has helped me grow. I'm sure if I went back and did everything "right", I would find myself in the same situation I am in now, realizing new ways I could have done better. Or perhaps, I would go back and tell myself the winning lottery numbers. Then I would be analyzing my mistakes in a Ferrari, which seems slightly better.

### What is one thing you find to be true that most people would disagree with?

The plans you make are blueprints that life inevitably scribbles over with crayons. The only certainty is that things will never go exactly the way you planned. And when you realize they won't, they just might. A lot of people disagree with this because they don't want to accept the inconsequentiality of their anticipation. There's a comfort in the illusion of being able to predict and control the future. On the other hand, there's a sort of freedom in the unsettling entropy of life; to appreciate it. However, you need to accept that life is not answerable to you, and not everything has an obvious explanation.

### If you had one piece of advice to someone just starting, what would it be?

Finish the first draft of your story. You can always edit a sloppy manuscript, but you can't edit a blank page. Treat your story as if it were a living entity. Don't abandon it because it will never abandon you. Self-doubt is unavoidable but reminds yourself that this story chose you because you have what it takes to haul the story into reality.

## Alumni Success Story

# Dared To Change The World



**Prakruti Kodali** (Hyderabad, '12) is the co-founder of pFIBRE that aims at changing the world by replacing plastic and plastic products. Here she shares how BITS helped her build entrepreneurial skills and what keeps her going during difficult times.

### Please share the concept behind pFIBRE.

At pFIBRE, we're developing fully marine biodegradable B2B packaging using 100% plant-based materials. Our solution is aimed at reducing plastic waste, and the greenhouse gas emissions that come with their manufacturing and disintegration. We hope that this will help towards a greener, sustainable Earth.

### What motivated you to work towards making the world a better place?

Our planet isn't in its best form because of pressing issues like climate change. I did not want to complain, give excuses or leave it to fate. I am committed to taking action and making the world a better place for future generations.

### What keeps you going during difficult times?

'The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it. This quote by Robert Swan, Polar Explorer, and WWF Fellow inspires me on good days and motivates me on difficult ones.

### How did you manage work in 2020?

At pFIBRE we are aiming to eliminate single-use plastic by 2030 and pandemic only proved to be a driving force for our work. The realization that we are running out of time keeps us going at all times.

### How did you develop entrepreneurial skills?

BITS allowed me to be a leader when I was elected as the Student Union consecutively for two years as a woman representative. We were the

founding batch of BITS Hyderabad and this was my launchpad as a co-founder – RAF, CEL, PEARL, DOSM, etc. We had to build the culture of our campus to make it charming for the students to join the campus. BITS made me realize the satisfaction I find in bettering the lives of people. I developed the skills I needed to become the CEO at BITS and the power of the network continues to be a strong support pillar.

### Advice would you give to young BITSians?

Explore as much as possible about yourself while at BITS. Your curiosity will help you build skills, make choices, take risks, give you the courage to make difficult decisions, and stand by them. You're among the smartest ones and nothing can stop you from achieving what you put your heart to.



# Together We Grew!

## A Corporate Leader During Work Hours, & A Writer-Director Off It!

**A. K. Srikanth** (Pilani, '92) has worked in various leadership roles with big corporate firms like Nestle, the Cleveland Clinic and OCS in India, America and Africa. He joined KLAY as the COO in 2017 and after his joining, the number of KLAY schools has increased over the country by 60%. In May 2020, he was appointed as the CEO of KLAY schools.

### What challenges did lockdown bring with itself for you?

2020 was the toughest test in my thirty-year career. I head a preschool chain, and our entire business came to a standstill with the lockdown. Due to this, we had 2 major challenges. First- continuing the education of the youngsters; second- to keep the firm from going bankrupt. Online classes were the only solution we were left with. We partnered with a South Korean firm for an interactive platform to duplicate the classroom. Eventually, we started sending the teachers to the children's homes which worked well with the children who had difficulty in concentrating on

online mediums. During the pandemic, I had to keep the revenue flowing in, motivate and stay connected with the staff so that the culture of our organization was not affected.

### Do you plan on expanding KLAY to other parts of India as well?

Expanding to every corner of India is certainly a part of our strategy, whether it happens through setting up physical schools or teaching children in small clusters in towns, that remains to be seen. We are also looking at international expansion over a slightly longer horizon, especially in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

### Being a CEO, how do you manage to follow your passion for writing and directing classical shows and plays?

I've been writing since my teen years, but my interest in classical theatre came about because of my wife Savitha Sastry, a renowned Bharatnatyam dancer. To me, writing is both

a pleasure and an outlet from the world of P&Ls, EBITDA's and the daily grind of work life. One always finds a way to follow their passion.

### How you and your team are teaching children about their safety?

Good health and safety are the most important aspects of our corporate and strategic existence for children and the staff. Other than teaching children about hygiene and healthy living habits, we also teach them about the good touch and the bad touch- simple but imperative lessons in these times. Our safety team is the second-largest department.

### What is that one lesson you learned at BITS but still apply in your life?

"Ask the right questions if you seek meaningful answers", these words by one of my professors helped me during a mental block, I faced during my PS-1 days, and I still recall them when in a fix.



## Positive Side-Effect Of Covid!

**Ashutosh Mundhada** (Pilani, '12) is the co-founder of the online physiotherapy & pain relief company, YourPhysio that raised \$350K pre-seed funding by Better Capital, Snapdeal Founders & BITSian Angels. YourPhysio's vision is to bring pain relief from back & joint pain for over 200+ conditions. We speak to Ashutosh about career choices & how BITS shaped his journey.

### What are some of the technologies and problems being worked on by PhysioTherapy?

The main problem that we are working on is the accessibility to quality physical healthcare. In a family, there is always a person suffering from joint pains. The problem is so common that people accept it as a part of their lives because they feel that the effort required is too much for them. We are trying to get rid of this mentality. Accessibility is the problem with physiotherapy because it is a huge friction activity and people drop out in between. We are trying to build a seamless experience and starting a session on PhysioTherapy will be as simple as streaming a movie on Netflix.

### How difficult was it to shift physical manipulation and acupuncture online?

The adoption of video technology is one of the positive outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the pandemic, people got comfortable with the idea of an online therapy session. Therapy is thought to be a high-touch treatment, but we made online therapy sessions

smooth which was accepted happily. This is where the credit goes to BITS. We don't build an incremental product, we understand how things operate and help in solving the problem.

### In what ways has your experience in previously working as an employee helped you in your startup?

I had my PS-2 at Credit Suisse and did 5 internships while studying, and that experience helped me understand the workings of a startup. I also realized various things about myself so I did an NVC course and got an A. I got to interact with the experts of healthcare when a team of doctors of Apollo hospital visited Pilani for assessment. Interaction of technology and healthcare was always at the back of my mind. After getting placed, I had an entire semester to figure out what I wanted to do. BITS instilled a sense of confidence in us that even if nothing worked out, we can always shut it down and begin from the scratch again.

So we went to Delhi for market research, met psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors. That is how YourPhysio came into being.



# Reaching For The Sky



**Yashodhan Naik** (Dubai, '20) is the CEO and Founder of Navifly, a drone software provider backed by Boeing and the Irish Aviation Authority among other big players. Navifly is registered in Ireland and expanding to Canada after having raised funds from both the

countries. Navifly is Unmanned Drone Traffic Management Platform (UTM) provider, which is enabling drone movements and transport in urban airspace.

## What advice would you give to the people who are starting?

People who are starting should believe in the following three points:

**Idea:** Every idea is the right idea, one just has to be courageous to break the conventions and do things that provide value to oneself and society. Famous people whose names are taken every second were normal people who didn't conform to the traditional norms, dared to think something different, and make the lives of everyone better.

**Team:** When you make people believe in something, they work together with you to make that something possible.

**Investment:** Ask for support and capital in the market for your idea/start-up. It is available in abundance than it ever was.

## What is your greatest fear, and how did you manage it?

My greatest fear was being rejected by a company due to average grades and the compromises that I would have had to survive.

When I started studying at BITS, I promised myself that I would not sit for placements and would figure something out on my own. The funny part is that when you're determined to work on that one plan, things automatically start working out in the most amazing ways.

## How did the idea for Navifly come about?

I was a part of the drone club and always wondered why nobody used them to their full potential. That was the first time I thought about a drone Unmanned Traffic Management platform. I came up with a name right away and pitched it at the next startup event with a team. Ever since the initial idea and the name have remained the same.

## What was the driving force to keep going with the idea?

When I pitched Navifly for the first time, we lost. However, a pilot from Emirates appreciated my idea and suggested that I build a sustainable team and work on refining my ideas. I got back to work, found the best developers and people and we together started turning an idea into a business.

The fact that a below-average student was appreciated for his startup idea at the first event was a factor that kept me motivated then and even now.

## Where do you see yourself and Navifly in five years?

I will run the most successful and innovative company in Urban Air Mobility in the next five years. Navifly began with a vision to revolutionize how we travel by air and will be at the forefront to make this happen.

# Inspired & Inspire



**Bishwajit Ghosh** (WILP, '15) is an Indian singer, songwriter, composer, software architect and an entrepreneur. He released 7 songs in 2020 and is all set to release more songs this year. Here, he shares his journey from a software developer to a musician.

## What was the reaction of your loved ones when you decided to pursue your passion?

After completing my Master's degree from BITS, I got a job as a software developer in Bangalore. It paid me good and the work environment was supportive. But deep down I knew I wasn't doing something that I loved. For me, education wasn't just about pursuing a job, but living a fulfilling life. My family knew about my passion for music. My curiosity to experience a studio recording made me set up a home studio. I learned audio programming and also various music-related gadgets and software which helped me produce music. My job required me to interact with clients for problem-solving and presentations. This gave me confidence in public speaking and networking. When I was convinced about my skills, convincing my family and friends wasn't difficult.

## How would you encourage young people through your music?

Youngsters are the future of our country and being an Indian, we should be proud of our musical history, heritage, and gharanas. We should be the best in the world but we lack acceptance from society, production, present ability, and knowledge entrepreneurship. I would invite the youngsters to my organization Fledge Entertainment where I would personally mentor and guide them on becoming entrepreneurs of their passion.

## How was the year 2020 for you?

2020 was all about surviving and cherishing what we have. I'm very happy with my decision to make music my way of life because my musical skills have given me the courage to fight the extremities. My work kept me going, and I released 7 songs last year. My song 'Hum Ek Hai' which is about unity in diversity received the most love. I always believed in gaining knowledge and skills and I'll forever be grateful to BITS Pilani. Education doesn't go in vain, it always repays you in the long run.

## Are there some international artists who inspire you and are a source of motivation for you?

I am inspired by Ed Sheeran, Adele, Bryan Adams, Billy Joel.

## What advice would you like to give to the youngsters who wish to pursue their passion as their career?

Young people should chase their dreams with a never-give-up attitude. Knowledge and skills can be acquired but a positive attitude helps us fight the adversities of life. I'm passionate about various things and have worked towards it. Today, I have organizations in music, aviation, education, and technology. So youngsters, just follow your passion and gain as much knowledge as you can towards achieving your goals.

## Alumni Speak

# No Regrets Only Lessons Learnt



Join **Apoorva Musunuri** (Hyderabad, '10) as she walks us through the highlights of her journey thus far. She currently works for Amazon (United States) as a Data Scientist and has previously worked at American Airlines.

I was always interested in Chemistry. A dual degree lets one explore a variety of courses and chose what suits him best. I chose to pursue Civil Engineering despite being faced with numerous stereotypical questions, and over time I discovered the keenness for Transportation Engineering.

I was able to link both the degrees through on-campus research. Being a national-level basketball player, I continued playing on the campus as well. Initially, we didn't have a proper court or coach, so we'd play on uneven ground and once or twice a week took a bus to practice off-campus. In my second year, a basketball court was made which was a phenomenal change.

BITSians careers often diverge from what they studied in the institute. I got into UC Berkeley which has the top programs for transportation engineering, and things progressed from there. While studying statistics as a curriculum, I learned about Operations Research, the field that I am currently working in. My first employer was American Airlines and I worked with their revenue management division on the optimization problems in the air transportation context. Although AA had older tech and was old-school in their approach, they had many interesting OR problems to solve. An irresistible perquisite that came along was that the employees could fly on AA routes for free on standby. Of all the trips, the most memorable will be the all-girls trip to Ecuador. When we visited Mt. Cotopaxi, the bus stopped at a forty-five-degree incline on the way up to the summit. Experiencing altitude sickness, some of us decided to lay down on the ground, while others trekked up to the summit and back. The capital city, Quito is the highest capital by altitude in the world, so we felt very light headed throughout. We also got to stand in 2 hemispheres at the same time!

After I started working with Amazon I saw the shift in the work culture. Amazon offered limitless technology and massive data to be analyzed with cutting-edge problems to solve. On the Supply Chain Optimization Technology (SCOT) program, some problems that we work on are the forecasting demand for the product, inventory to be purchased from the supplier, inventory placement, and prediction of delivery times.

I have undergone several changes in my field of work over the last five years but never for a minute did I regret taking up civil. The scope of transport engineering varies from country to country. It plays part in public transportation, roadway, and airport design.

However, I would not discount the role that coding has played in my professional life. I was adamant about never learning coding and here I am, coding at work every day. Over the years, I've observed that a lot of people take up courses under parental or societal pressure but what you are interested in is all that matters in the end.

# Future is Renewable Energy



**Govinda Upadhyay** (Goa, '05) is focused on making renewable energy accessible to everyone. He is driven towards using technological innovations as an aid to flourish sustainable living. Govinda is on the Forbes 30 under 30 list for his contribution in the renewable energy. Here he shares his journey from LED Safari to Smarthelio; which with its Solar Analytics and Diagnostics software has raised US \$1.3M in equity and non-dilutive funding, another US \$2.5M are in progress. He is based out of Switzerland.

I lived in an area where electricity was just a dream and I studied under a lamp, literally! This struggle motivated me to do something which would prove better for the future generations. That is why I was fascinated with Solar. I find the solar energy panels beautiful; the sun is always there, no matter where you are on the globe.

After graduating from BITS, I pursued higher studies in Sustainable energy technology in Europe and started my first start-up, LED Safari. My life mission is to accelerate adoption of clean energy in our society. It can be done by education to our next generation about sustainability as well as making clean technology more efficient.

Soon I set out to travel the world and understand the world of renewables. At LED Safari, we developed an educational DIY solar lamp kits and trained teenagers learn the process of to make a lamp for studying. This not only empowered them but also instilled in them a hope for better future and the idea of a cleaner and a greener planet.

When we distributed over 100,000 kits all around the world (India, Europe, Africa, America etc), the compa-

ny was honored with the European Institute for Innovation & Technology Change Award in 2015. It was followed by the Swiss Ambassador Award and Asia Young Leader Award.

I believe in highly agile progression in life, so I kept learning more about the Solar and Renewable Energy. In late 2019, I started SmartHelio, a deep data analytics company for Solar Asset Management. I realized that due to poor or manual O&M practices, Solar started losing interest in people and is inefficient. Solar Energy was not being utilized to the fullest because the technologies were not up to the mark. Furthermore, solar panels were dying before their living their full life (within 5-10 years instead of 20 years), creating e-waste problem for future.

To make the world a better place to live, I knew that bringing a change in the consumption of the renewable energy would be a daunting affair. By making any kind of renewable energy accessible to the end user, through technological user, could help in bringing about the sustainability factor.

I together with my team of like-minded people created a cutting edge IoT smart sensor based on edge computing, which we call HelioHealth sensor. This one of a kind, plug and sensor, gave the company a lead over its competitors by providing real-time diagnostics at the panel level. SmartHelio is a step ahead with its real time diagnostics and prescriptive technology that triggers before the fault occurs and minimize the loss. Through this, SmartHelio has improved the performance of the solar plants by 15%.

But you see, grass is not green all the time! When the company was taking shape, the pandemic hit and the everything came to a halt. During this time the company emerged as a dark horse and introduced Self Service Cloud Analytics tool which lets the user diagnose their plant and get a report with a few clicks. When the world came to a standstill, SmartHelio brought analytics to its users' fingertips and increased its consumers base and the technological partnerships to strengthen the core.

I hope the young generations take sustainability more seriously and force us and the governments to take right steps.

# Think Big, Create Bigger Perspective

*Rahul Jandhyala (Pilani, '06) is the Director of Product Management at HighRadius. In this interview, he talks about the use of AI in Finance, how his stint as a Software Engineer at Accenture helped him develop the technical skills for Product Thinking.*

## What skills are important for a product manager?

Design Thinking and Problem Solving are the backbones of Product Management. It helps you break down a problem statement, understand what a customer wants, empathize with them, and understand the pain points. Technical Knowledge as a skill is often debated as you limit yourself to technical solutions, but you should strive to think about it from a bigger perspective. A Product Manager needs to find the right balance between customer stated requirement and business requirement. You can't arrive directly at conclusions; you need to let the customer speak, empathize with them about what they want and expect, and understand the more significant problem. It will help you find the most efficient solution.

## HighRadius makes use of AI in finance to automate accounts receivables and Treasury processes. In what ways do you think AI can further influence this industry?

AI is a very general term nowadays. Robotic Process Automation helps us automate many repetitive tasks with no human decision-making. It can replace human jobs at one point but only those repetitive ones which require no intellectual thinking. ML can help you with human decisions, but it can never replace humans because we can take fairly complex decisions, which machines can't do. So it can help you automate redundant tasks or help take your decisions faster, but it can't decide for you as the stakes are high. It acts as a catalyst but can never complete the entire process.

## What is the core difference between working as a software developer and an MBA graduate? How did your experience as a developer help you in the PM career?

It helped me to make data-driven decisions after I got into an analyst and product management role. Data mining and market research need to be done as a Product Manager, so SQL helped me with the data crunching. I find the journey to building products quite exciting. Many small decisions are to be made regarding your stakeholders, total addressable market, the total number of customers, and the infrastructure. All these small crucial decisions eventually build your base for the entire product.

## What is the role of an MBA in developing relevant skills for Product Management?

MBA is not necessary for someone aspiring to go into Product Management. What matters is developing skills like stakeholder management, conflict resolution, negotiation and design thinking. One can acquire these skills via internships or by working on projects. MBA helps in networking and understanding people. Solving Case Studies with my peers during the MBA helped me understand the core problems we face while developing and marketing a product. iPad launched around the time when I was doing an MBA. There was no pain point, as people were already using iPhones and Laptops. It is a classic case study as there was no void, and Apple managed to create an imaginary void in the brain. This is how case studies help one. MBA also helped me interact with many people and understand various perspectives and respect others' opinions. Your voice may not be the best in the group, and you learn to accept that people might have better opinions than you.



# Startups with Fundamentals will Go Long Way

## Technology = Everyday Lives

**Dharmarajan S.** (Pilani, '90) with over 25 years of experience in Business Leadership, is the founder of Impactsure Technologies - an intellectual property based strategic consultancy, leading enterprise benchmarking and best practices driven digital transformation and deployment firm, which focus in the areas of Workflow Automation using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Natural Language Processing (NLP), and Analytics. He has also worked with Johnson & Johnson and at Philips. In this interview, he talks about Entrepreneurial Leadership, through Technology, Strategy and Governance.

### **What is your opinion on the integration of new-age technology in business? Are we truly in a new phase of the digital revolution?**

It makes most people marvel at how powerful technology has become. But something bigger is happening. Technology is disappearing—both in the consumer and business sphere. What I mean is, it is becoming invisible and is becoming part of our lives.

Everything we want - servers, software, IT resources - can be provided to us whenever we need them, just at a click. We have the benefits of technology, rather than the technology itself. Similarly, services will continue to disappear. For example, in the case of banking, the first phase of digitization was dematerialization, but the next phase will seamlessly integrate banking with the rest of our lives, making it all but invisible.

Bank's proprietary channels like web portals etc. will give way to third-party channels like WhatsApp, Telegram, PayTm, and so on. Moreover, banks will have to provide increasing levels of value-addition to retain their customers. They'll have to help consumers make informed financial and commercial decisions, introduce them to the right services tailored to their needs, and deliver seamlessly over the right channel. This, in my opinion, is a new phase of the digital revolution.

### **You have been associated with some big names such as Johnson & Johnson and Philips. As someone who has closely observed the business model for numerous enterprises, what are some ways in which businesses in India have changed and where do you think the future is headed?**

The biggest change that has happened is technology enablement. I started my career as a salesperson 25 years ago. My job was to go directly to the customer to talk about our product, give information about our competition, tell the customer about the overall market, etc. The approach was very different. Today, the customer is very clear as to what he wants and at what price. If you can win his confidence and build trust, the deal is yours!

Technology has become such a big enabler in every walk of life. Traditional businesses have some levels of scalability, but with technology enablement scalability is way higher. To that extent, there has been a big change in the business models. Of course, the fundamental of "business for making profits" is still important.

### **Given your vast expertise, what piece of advice would you offer to young entrepreneurs who are hoping to make it big? What are some key elements that could make a startup successful?**

Today's young entrepreneurs have the exposure, tools, and ecosystem to support their growth. They have energy and a clarity of vision to make it big. This clarity, along with their passion to win, will take them long.

The media talks only about successful ventures, big valuations, huge funding, unicorns, etc. Young entrepreneurs should dream big, but also remember that only a very small fraction of them make it to be a unicorn with huge valuations. Instead of engaging only with the valuation game, entrepreneurs should ensure that the fundamentals are in place. They should have a good revenue model. Profitability is an important criterion. If the fundamentals are in place, they will go a much longer way.

### **What is one of your favorite memories from your time at BITS Pilani that has stayed over the years till now with you?**

The days at BITS Pilani were perhaps the best period for me. The culture at BITS honed me. It shaped me and groomed me to become a better leader through the various activities that I partook in. Those lessons of leadership during the early stages were immensely useful and are helping me to date. Another fond memory I must mention, is my frequent visits to the beautiful Saraswati temple. It used to be blissful and kept me a calm demeanor.



## How Did The Globe Trotters Travel in 2020?

# Start Small, Start Somewhere

*Prasanna Veeraswamy (Pilani, '96) and Sangeetha Rangnath (Pilani, '96) have traveled the world while working full-time. Prasanna Veeraswamy has visited every country defined by the UN and his wife Sangeetha has been to 168 countries. They took their first international flight in 1998 when they moved to the US. Ever since, the couple has broken stereotypes of having a family and lived their lives to the fullest with no regrets. Here they share what travel means to them and the friendships they fostered in the last two decades.*



### How was 2020 for you considering the global lockdown?

In 2020, we were living in Singapore, and need I say more how interesting that time became. Being locked in a country is very painful for someone who likes traveling. Being caged inside an island nation means nothing more than going to a nearby island or jogging to the picturesque reservoirs and gardens. But my wife and I took one day at a time. I spent 200 days sharing throwback pictures of 200 different places. I went down memory lane through this and lived my passion for travel.

### Your Instagram handle is PintViews. Did you always want to travel and taste ales from different parts of the world or it happened over time?

My primary Instagram handle is @travelcurry that captures my travels in general. PintViews is a parallel angle of my travels. In 2016, I took a picture with a beer at interesting spots during my travel. I gave this a special hashtag, #beerscape. After a while it got addictive and the collection started growing. What more, my wife and I are big fans of Craft Beer and make sure to taste the best local beers every time we travel.

### What is that one destination that has your heart and you'd like to visit over and over again?

My answer will always be - "Incredible India!" and not because we're Indian, but because of the mind-blowing aspects and characteristics this country provides. It's more suitable to be called a continent than a nation!

A lot lies at one's disposal to get immersed in unforgettable experiences of landscapes, activities, languages, people, and the unmatched delicacy of the varied cuisines. Biking through high-altitude mountain passes, spotting tigers and leopards in protected wildlife reserves, experiencing the romance of rail journey in a luxury train, walking over a frozen river, floating over stunning forts in a hot air balloon, exploring ancient ruins and monuments, hiking through tea estates in a hill station and the list goes on. No other country can you treat yourself to such a diverse set of enthralling experiences.

### How do you find the time to explore those new places when your work goes everywhere you go?

We consider ourselves blessed because we both have a job in online technology with flexible working hours. However, this never meant we worked for fewer hours. We were always plugged in and connected to our work, irrespective of the part of the globe we were in. The bonus was that our companies allowed us to execute our deliverables even when we were remote. That being said, we still travel during long weekends and take typical longer vacations twice a year.

### Please share your experience of meeting people from varied cultures.

Connecting with the locals and bonding with them is one philosophy that is important to us. This not just helps us understand the destination, but also know the history, people, and culture. We befriended an African manager in

Uganda who did his undergrad from Chennai. He surprised us by cooking some curry and chapatti.

We also befriend people who are visitors just like us and feel the attraction to bond and connect because of the hunger for serious traveling. This helped us to get to know various cultures.

### What would you like to say to the people who also want to travel the world but hesitate due to some reason or the other?

Simple advice - 'Get over the Inertia'! The only way travel can become a part of people's lives is - if it is not treated as a 'vacation', but a part of their lifestyle. Just like other people who like to explore new places to hang out, we are always eager to explore new places, cultures, and nightlife. That's what has made travel a regular part of our life.

While staying in Pilani, I was often made fun of for not knowing the basic geography. At that time, I hadn't travelled much other than a few states in India. I didn't have a passport till I was 25 years. But what happened later completely transformed me.

I have fear of flying and water because of which it took a long for me to start traveling. Once I got out of my comfort zone, there was no holding back.

I can't recollect things that I have acquired over the last two decades. But I will never forget any of the scintillating experiences, I have earned over the same period. That is why we feel that travel has to be part of our regular life.

# Journey of a Research Engineer to a Producer

## Guinness World Record Holder

**Mani Shankar** (Pilani, '78) is a Bollywood director and a holographic technology expert. He has written and directed numerous feature films, ad films, socially relevant documentaries and image building films in Hindi and English. He was also the architect of the world's first holographic political campaign, for which he holds a Guinness World Record that's as yet unbeaten since 2012.

### Tell us about your college days at BITS.

Life at BITS was a memorable experience, full of adrenaline and nervous situations. Real and significant learning always happened beyond the confines of a classroom. My mainstays were dramatics and debate circuits. Surviving on a shoestring budget, I needed the extra bucks from debate competitions.

My first tryst with the performing artists was when I used to hang out with the performers. I eventually took charge backstage and weathered the numerous challenges during Oasis. Managing a Cultural festival is a huge skill and a great experience. Making a career in the creative field dawned upon me eventually.

### You are known for making films that are technology-driven and forward-looking. Is that a deliberate effort or a natural expression?

I feel that having a technical background helps you adopt to new technology better. It helps you grasp the unknown. In my years of experience, I have observed that many in the film industry are hesitant to embrace new technology. Although they appreciate creative ideas, they think of themselves solely as artists. In fact, most directors don't know how to handle a camera, they leave it to the cinematographers. But, due to my technical background, I developed the attitude of wanting to do something radically different and be on top of everything.

### How did you transition from being a research engineer to a filmmaker?

I worked as a writer at an ad agency and inevitably started making ad films and short films. Hence my first tryst with filmmaking. Gradually, I attended shoots, where I learned about photography and direction, picked up books about photography, and learned on the fly. That's when I felt ready to go on my own, and for a decade it was an arduous struggle. But I knew that if I didn't follow my heart, I would regret it later. Learning new skills became an integral part of my life because I had no God-father in the industry.

The industry does not accept you until and



unless you show that you belong there. Soon I comprehended that along with being a filmmaker, I also needed to be a businessman, persuade people, and get things done. This self-confidence to conquer uncharted territory is something that BITS with all its extra-curricular activities gave me.

### What is it like to work with Narendra Modi and other politicians?

The confidence to design and reimagine new technologies resulted from my days at BITS Pilani. Whilst in London, I saw the emergence of 3D holography, I knew that it could prove to be a game-changer in India. The idea was to redesign the system and miniaturize it to make the technology fit into a shipping container that could be mounted on a truck and move about.

After developing this idea, my team approached the then Gujarat CM, Shri Narendra Modi, in 2012 before the Gujarat elections. We got a go ahead and we showcased his holograms in rallies at over 800 locations, with 53 live appearances at one go. This earned us a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. Later, we dabbled in augmented reality and AI-based AR and implemented

them for several campaigns.

### How should youngsters chart their way into the entertainment field?

Passion is the foremost ingredient because it brings out hidden energy, keeps you going when things get tough. Not having book knowledge doesn't matter because one can always learn online. But the passion to keep you moving forward at all times is critical. A newcomer must view his career as pursuing an art-form, not as a glamorous money-making profession. The massive reward will be in the form of writing the script, etching the role, and composing the song.

It's a competitive field with thousands vying for a few positions. Without passion, one can't endure the failures that abound in the industry. So look at life as an artistic pursuit and don't let hard times shake you. Keep your head in the clouds, your feet firmly on the ground, be real, don't expect miracles- and keep plodding ahead at all costs.

Some will find slow growth, inching their way upwards. Others will grow in spurts followed by periods of stagnation. A few will get lifted overnight to fame and glory. Be patient. Either way, your turn will surely come.

# Giving Back

October 2020– March 2021

We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to all the alumni who have made individual or collective contributions and corporates for CSR funding.

1. An amount of **Rs 28.57 lakhs** was received from the alumni of 1990-94/95 batch (through BITSAA International), who celebrated their Silver Jubilee celebration at Pilani Campus in November 2019 towards contributing back to their alma mater.
2. An amount of **Rs 31.12 lakhs** was received from the alumni of 1994-98/99 batch (through BITSAA International and individual donations in India), who celebrated their 25th year of joining at Pilani Campus in December 2019 towards contributing back to their alma mater.
3. Mr. Chaitanya Kalipatnapu (Pilani, '01) has pledged substantial amount towards building an Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality Lab (AR/VR Lab) in the proposed BITS Pilani Incubation and Innovation Centre at Pilani Campus.
4. An amount of **Rs 1 crore** was donated by Mr. Mukesh Sharma (Pilani, '95) of QA InfoTech towards a co-working space in the BITS Pilani Incubation and Innovation Centre at Pilani Campus, and setting up a research fellowship in the area of blockchain/ AI/AR-VR.
5. An amount of **Rs 25 lakhs** was received from the pledged amount of **Rs 75 lakhs** by Mr Rakesh Kumar Verma (Pilani, '72) of MapmyIndia (CE Info Systems Pvt. Ltd.) funding for the upcoming BITS Pilani Incubation and Innovation Centre along with mentorship, seed funding to promising start-ups.
6. An amount of **Rs 2.74 lakhs** has been received from CMS computers Limited towards the two scholarships under 80% MCN in honor of Late Shri R. D. Grover (Pilani, '68).
7. An amount of **Rs 15 lakhs** was donated by Mr. Ashok Jain (Pilani, '70) and another **Rs 3 lakhs** from Mr. Roshan Nauhria (Pilani, '70) towards the proposed Pilani Convention Center project in Pilani Campus.
8. Mr. Prem Talreja (Pilani, '75) confirmed to contribute **Rs 15 lakhs** for the BITS Pilani Incubation and Innovation Centre at Pilani Campus.
9. An amount of **Rs 20 lakhs** was donated by Atul Bhatnagar (Pilani, '79) for institutionalizing five 100% MCN scholarships for the needy students admitted in AY 2020-21.
10. During the last quarter, an amount of **Rs 12.90 lakhs** was received either from individual alumni or through BITSAA International towards merit-cum-need scholarships to the needy students for the Semester II, 2019-20. Some of these include: BITS86, Shantha E. Iyer, Pendaliya Vamsi Krishna, M. R. Dalmia, S. K. Agarwal, S. S. Seshadari Memorial, Rakesh Chandra, BITSian day.
11. An amount of **Rs 8.64 lakhs** was received from individual alumni either directly or through BITSAA International as a continuing financial support under the daily wage campaign for providing ration to the washerman's/rediwallahas/auto-rikshaw drivers and other essential staff, who have been serving students in the three Indian campuses.
12. An amount of **Rs 7.50 lakhs** was donated by Mr. Anand Arvind (Pilani, '92) as an addition to the BITS88 revolving fund.
13. Century Textiles & Industries Limited has donated **Rs 3 crores** under CSR funding towards setting up BITS Pilani Incubation and Innovation Centre at Pilani Campus.
14. Aditya Birla Capital Foundation has donated **Rs 2.2 crores** under CSR Funding towards setting up BITS Pilani Incubation and Innovation Centre at Pilani Campus.
15. An amount of **Rs 21 lakhs** was donated by Birla Carbon under CSR funding towards two research projects at K. K. Birla Goal Campus.

# *Special Thanks To*

## **Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya**

*Vice Chancellor*

## **Prof. Sudhirkumar Barai**

*Director, Pilani Campus*

## **Prof. Raghurama G**

*Director, K K Birla Goa Campus*

## **Prof. G. Sundar**

*Director, Hyderabad Campus*

## **Prof. R. N. Saha**

*Director, Dubai Campus*

## **Prof. Arya Kumar**

*Dean, Alumni Relations*

## **Prof. Rajeev Sakhuja**

*Associate Dean, Pilani Campus*

## **Prof. Veeky Baths**

*Associate Dean, K. K. Birla Goa Campus*

## **Prof. M. Viswanathan**

*Associate Dean, Hyderabad Campus*

## **Prof. Trupti Gokhale**

*Faculty-in-Charge, Dubai Campus*

## **WRITE US @**

**[alumnirelations@pilani.bits-pilani.ac.in](mailto:alumnirelations@pilani.bits-pilani.ac.in)**

*Alumni Relations Division  
Birla Institute of Technology and Science  
Vidya Vihar, Pilani, Rajasthan  
333 031*

## **MESSAGE FROM Editorial Team**

**Dear Alumni,**

Warm greetings from BITS Pilani.

The Alumni Relations Division is delighted to bring the April issue of the BITS Echo covering some noteworthy BITSians who have opted to think beyond the boundaries of curricula. This issue celebrates talented BITSian who have established themselves as well-renowned authors, educationists, creative thinkers and entrepreneurs, truly displaying the BITSian spirit to excel in whatever they love and enjoy doing. In this issue, we introduce to you five accomplished BITSian authors and one budding author, who's pursuing her higher studies. This issue also features an interview by a BITSian couple, Prasanna Veeraswamy and Sangeetha Rangnath, who have traveled to a large number of countries of the world, while pursuing their corporate assignments.

This issue features A.K. Srikanth the writer-director and CEO of KLAY Schools, Prakruti Kodali, the co-founder of pFIBRE and Govinda Upadhyay who relentlessly works for a better society. It also covers some young BITSians like Yashodhan Naik (CEO, Navify), Kashev Maheshwari (MD, Allen), Apoorva Mansuri, and Rahul Jayandhala who have attained high standards of excellence in their respective fields.

Perseverance and passion to succeed always bring the best of us. Dharamrajan S. with his vast experience in Business management shares how technology will become an indispensable part of human beings in the coming times. On a similar note, Mani Shankar, a Guinness World Record holder, shows how his passion for art is ever-growing. We will always be grateful to our alumni for invaluable contributions to this quarterly alumni magazine. We sincerely hope that the contributions in the magazine would encourage and inspire many more BITSians to explore different paths of knowledge and carve out their own journey's.

Wishing you all best of health and happiness during these times.

## **EDITORIAL TEAM**

**Prof. Arya Kumar**

**Prof. Rajeev Sakhuja**

**Prof. Vijayakumar**

**Sachin Arya**

**Saurabh Suman**

**Geetika**

### **Supported by SARC Team Members**

Deeksha Sachan, Imad Mehmood, Mardiyah Khadijah, Pranshu Goyanka, Ritik Panda, Rhea Verma, Ronak Vishnoi, Yash Thakker, Ishita Bhatnagar, Sparsh Agarwal, Vidushi Sahay, Aarushi Roy, Pulkit Sinha, Abhigya Singh, Rushabh Musthyala, Nivedan Vishwanath, Nikita Lalwani, Akshitha Srinivasan, Soumya A Thomas, Nikita Sahu, Abhinav Krishna, Aritra Mukherjee, Ayush Vij, Karan Shetty