

Leadership Talk with Mr. Abhishek Suryawanshi

Date: April 7th, 2020

Time: 11 AM

Speakers:

- **Dr. Abhay Jere, the CIO of MHRD Innovation Cell, Govt. of India**
- **Mr. Abhishek Suryawanshi, Director, Wikipedia SWASTHVA**

Viewer List :

Soumalya Kundu, Aditya Das, Ananya Banerjee, Ayush Pareek, Arpan Mukherjee, Sk Shahnawaz, Akriti Jain, Ritwika Chattopadhyay, Gargi Sinha Sarkar, Dibyangana Misra, Kushal Chakrobarati, Vandita Mukherjee, Chandraprva Nayek.

Brief description of the discussion:

The discussion began with the Chief Innovation Officer of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) Innovation Cell, Government of India, **Dr. Abhay Jere**, introducing the viewers to the sixth speaker of the Leadership Talk series, **Mr. Abhishek Suryawanshi**. He intimated the viewers with his position as the director of India Operations, at Wikipedia. He let the viewers know about him meeting Mr. Abhishek once, when he was in his second year of studies, in the Pharmacy course.

Mr. Abhishek briefly spoke on his role at Wikipedia, and also voiced what unites Wikipedia volunteers across the globe: the drive to provide everyone, irrespective of their place of birth, financial status etc., knowledge, totally free of cost. The volunteers speak different languages, and belong to different parts of the globe but, the one thing that unites all of them is "the desire to share knowledge."

When asked about his role as the director of Wikipedia's **SWASTHA initiative**, he humbly regarded himself as "a mere soldier" in the volunteer society of Wikipedia, whose sole job is to see to the fact that the 70,000+ Wikipedia volunteers, at any given point of time, are provided the financial and non-financial help so that information is accessible to all. He explained why it is necessary to have a devoted page on health, since Wikipedia receives 10 times the traffic websites of CDC and WHO receive, amidst the global COVID-19 crisis.

When enquired about him being an employee at Wikipedia, he made it clear that volunteers- who edit – never receive any kind of payment. Individuals who host workshops, raise funds or partner with Wikipedia, may only receive payments. Answering a question asking about Wikipedia's global footprint, he apprised the viewers of Wikipedia having the fifth largest readership on internet. Wikimedia Foundation does not have more than 500 employees, though, which is in stark contrast to companies like Google and Facebook, which have more than 10,000 employees, at any given point of time.

When asked, how Wikipedia ensures authenticity, despite being open-source, Mr. Abhishek touched upon three points: Notability, whether a topic needs a separate article and, how third-party references ensure credibility of articles. The credibility, again, depends on the notability.

Dr. Abhay then brought a popular complaint many Wikipedia readers have- reverting back right corrections, to which Mr. Abhishek replied, all articles aren't editable. For instance, the article on COVID-19 is "locked", which means only editors who have a standing in the volunteer community can edit these. He even explained why the Wikipedia logo has an incomplete globe, since it signifies every single Wikipedia article is a "work in progress", and that explains the editability.

Dr. Abhay requested Mr. Abhishek to share with viewers, his incredulous but true journey. Mr. Abhishek narrated to the viewers his "bed-ridden" and homeschooled childhood, spent in a small village in Borkha, Solapur district (Maharashtra), how his family helped him recover from severe asthma, how he joined a "normal school" and then, became a part of NCSC. That, in his opinion, changed his life.

There, he came up with a Suction Method of irrigation, which ultimately led him to meet the President of NCSC and, the honourable President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, at IIT Guwahati, in December 2004. He even recalled meeting Dr. Sahasrabudhe there and recalled how people like him and Dr. Abhay leave no stone unturned in advancing young, innovative minds.

After this, he was able to become a part of the Government of India sponsored educational series called "Hum honge Kamyab", earning the distinction of being the only one from Maharashtra to make it to the show. Being a Marathi speaker couldn't stop him from achieving this feat. He credited having access to opportunities as the differentiator.

Dr. Abhay questioned next, how he went on to join Wikipedia from that position? In reply, he elucidated, he couldn't get the fellowship of TED, since he was under-aged. He spoke about his association with Gates Foundation thereon. He had hosted 60+ TEDx events, even before reaching the age of 18. This held him in good stead to host the 10th anniversary celebrations of Gates Foundation at Pune and, quite astonishingly, his webcast had more attendees, compared to that of the headquarter at US.

The 10th anniversary of Wikipedia was the next major event in his life. They were opening their first physical office in India and hence, he was asked to become a Campus Ambassador, which he gladly accepted. His attempts to take TEDx to the slum communities had augured well, with respect to his selection.

He was in favour of Wikipedia adopting an approach to accommodate the regional languages of India. The absence of local flavour, he said, had been evident till then, since the Wikipedia article on Nashik Kumbh Mela was entirely written by foreigners. Moreover, popular and historical sites like Pataleshwar Caves(in Pune) didn't have articles devoted to them.

Hence, he, along with fellow Pune volunteers, took the initiative of filling this void. They would go to such popular sites on weekdays, "have fun, create memories and write articles" on these places, which would then become a part of Wikipedia's ocean of knowledge. Such was their approach that even his co-volunteers from Sudan asked him to come over and enlighten them with their approach.

Dr. Abhay then enquired, what is the approximate number of volunteer-editors Wikipedia currently have in India? "5 to 50", was his answer. In addition to this, he highlighted the necessity of having historical information on Google and Wikipedia, since, in 25-30 years, "if it's not on internet, it doesn't exist" will be the reality.

Dr. Abhay then expressed another popular query. He wanted to know whether Wikipedia uses Artificial Intelligence, and if yes, then to what degree is it used. To this, Mr. Abhishek replied, most of the work is done by human volunteers. According to him, machines aren't advanced enough to handle tasks like article-writing, as of now. He talked about the usage of bots though, which act as a check against plagiarism.

On a concluding note, Dr. Abhay asked Mr. Abhishek to leave a message for the Indian youth, primarily those who are studying engineering and other technology-related courses. To this, he said, all the young minds need is an access to opportunities and information. They need to be proactive in this regard. Also, working on soft skills is of prime importance. Reaching out to people for explaining your idea and the reason behind your passion is of prime importance. People like Dr. Abhay Jere and **Dr. Sahasrabudhe** will support you in your pursuit of bringing a change.

The poster features a central black banner with the text "Leadership talk with Mr. Abhishek Suryawanshi" in yellow and white. On either side of the banner are portraits of Mr. Abhishek Suryawanshi (left) and Dr. Abhay Jere (right). Above the banner are logos for MHRD, MIC, AICTE, and the Institution's Innovation Council. Below the banner, a blue bar contains the names and titles of both speakers. A central blue bar with a Twitter icon and "LIVE @abhayjere" indicates the event's platform. The date and time "Tuesday, 7 April 2020 at 11.00 AM" are displayed in yellow. At the bottom, a white bar with a blue Twitter icon and the URL "www.twitter.com/mhrd_innovation" provides contact information.

MHRD MIC AICTE INSTITUTION'S INNOVATION COUNCIL (Ministry of HRD Initiatives)

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with
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Mr. Abhishek Suryawanshi
Director
Wikipedia SWASTHA

Dr. Abhay Jere
Chief Innovation Officer
MHRD Innovation Cell

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Promotional poster, released by Dr. Abhay Jere



Mr. Abhishek on left, and Dr. Abhay Jere on right, during discussion

Leadership Talk with Dr. K VijayRaghavan

Date: April 8th, 2020

Time: 11:00 AM

Speakers:

- **Dr. Abhay Jere, the CIO of MHRD Innovation Cell, Govt. of India**
- **Dr. Krishnaswamy VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser, Govt. of India**

Viewer List :

Soumalya Kundu, Aditya Das, Ananya Banerjee, Ayush Pareek, Arpan Mukherjee, Sk Shahnawaz, Akriti Jain, Ritwika Chattopadhyay, Gargi Sinha Sarkar, Dibyangana Misra, Kushal Chakrobarati, Vandita Mukherjee, Chandraprva Nayek, Yash Gupta

Brief description of the discussion:

The seventh part of the Leadership Talk Series, which is hosted by Dr. Abhay Jere, the Chief Innovation Officer of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, began with him introducing the speaker for the day, Dr. Krishnaswamy VijayRaghavan. He expressed his gratefulness for him, since he took out time from his extremely busy schedule, which is spent co-ordinating India's fight against the global pandemic COVID-19, along with keeping a tab on it with global agencies like WHO, UNICEF, FTO etc, in the capacity of Principal Scientific Adviser, Government of India.

The session's first question from Dr. Abhay enquired about Dr. VijayRaghavan's perspective on India's fight against COVID-19. To this, he said, India started to see the effects of the pandemic after countries like China had already bore its brunt. At the same time, countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal and United States (primarily New York) had just begun feeling its effects. He acknowledged that the fight the aforementioned countries were engaged in was, in no manner, the blueprint for India. Factors like demography, population density, difference in their and India's health systems and the difference in the magnitude of economic impact, hold key to our struggle. Hence, the need was to adapt, keeping in mind the above factors.

He also informed that the Health Ministry, along with the other ministries, has been working hard from the beginning, to ensure that the steps are "taken on the ground." All these efforts led him to remark that India has done an "incredible" job till now, in fighting this complex and multi-faceted issue.

Dr. Abhay questioned next, according to him, what have been our major successes and what are the aspects we need to improve on, in our fight against COVID-19? Dr. VijayRaghavan felt that the checking of international travellers and their effective tracing has been the biggest positive for him. He accepted that in the beginning, India didn't know how asymptomatic people might come into picture. Along with other things, we took time to learn but, we have "scaled up well" and we need to "continue doing so."

Things like contact tracing and testing continue to be worked upon. He also advised the viewers to install the "Aarogya Setu" application, which is available on all platforms and will be soon available for feature phones too. With its complex algorithm and Q&A, it will determine whether the user needs testing or not. He felt this can be a "very powerful tool" in our struggle.

Dr. Abhay then questioned about the substance behind the reports which suggest that there might be a correlation between BCG vaccination and low rates of COVID-19 illness. Dr. VijayRaghavan stated that there is "no strong evidence" to establish the correlation, since BCG or any other kind of vaccination has not been "mass-deployed." Nevertheless, he remarked that these scientific correlations are interesting to note. "Older people are at a greater risk but, if they have been BCG vaccinated, they would be safe", isn't the case necessarily, according to him.

He talked about the thought process behind this argument, how BCG immunisation causes the body to develop a better immune response due to inflammation and the reason behind correlation's prematurity: relative severity isn't calculated, normalised causes of death aren't considered and, correlation between greater number of deaths and higher average income, for a country, despite universal BCG vaccination (like a low average income country), isn't considered as well. He also commented that the immune system doesn't protect against a broad spectrum of ailments when vaccinated for a particular disease, contrary to popular opinion.

Dr. Abhay asked next, about the responses and requests he (Dr. VijayRaghavan) must have received from the ordinary citizens, regarding innovation and ideas, for the fight against the pandemic. He mentioned how a committee headed by him and Dr. Vinod Paul look into these ideas. These are first sent to top scientists around the country, after which they provide their reviews. The reviews are

thoroughly read and accordingly, a feedback is given, to classify the ideas into one of the various categories they have made, based on the ease of implementation and the time needed for doing so.

Dr. Abhay enquired about the amount of ideas they receive, to which he replied, "10-20 ideas per day." He further said, regulation and facilitation of complex ideas is required, which is provided by their committee. The easier ones, which are more in number, are quickly dealt with. Ideas which are given a positive feedback generally "embark on to greater things."

When asked about a mechanism for funding of these ideas, Dr. VijayRaghavan replied, there are various sources from which funds are generated: institutions, entrepreneurs and industries being the prime ones. The flexibility that has been afforded in the time of crisis has augured well in this regard too.

Approaching towards the end, Dr. Abhay then enquired, whether he was happy with the way the scientific community of India has responded to the crisis. To this, Dr. VijayRaghavan said, they have received "incredible responses" from city-clusters like Bengaluru (on providing IT-based solutions and vaccines), Pune (repurposing of drugs), Hyderabad and Delhi-NCR region. He appreciated the positive response of IIT Delhi, because of which scientists and engineers have "come together" and have done "great things."

Dr. Abhay went in great detail to explain his last question: how MHRD had organised an Idea Hackathon recently and received 3,500+ ideas (including 350+ ideas from the startup domain), thereby making it successful and how, they were planning to organise a mega-challenge in the near future. Regarding that, what would be his (Dr. VijayRaghavan's) advice for the youngsters?

Answering this, he said, youngsters need to primarily focus on those who are "the most vulnerable." The ideas should be such that they provide maximum return on efforts and value. He cited various examples, viz. social distancing for a family of seven living in a small flat, hygienic use of taps in common wash-basins, washrooms and showers and maintaining the economic growth in such dire circumstances. He regarded these challenges as complex but solvable.

Dr. VijayRaghavan ended his answer with positive words: how this "horrible crisis", which has come like "a bolt from the blue", has given each one of us opportunities: to reassess our priorities, check the strength of bonds between communities and, reviewing our health systems.

Dr. Abhay thanked Dr. VijayRaghavan again, for taking time out for this session, from his "enormously busy schedule."






Leadership talk

with

Prof. K Vijay Raghavan

Prof. K Vijay Raghavan
Principal Scientific Adviser
Government of India

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Wednesday, 8th April 2020 at 11.00 AM

Dr. Abhay Jere
Chief Innovation Officer
MHRD Innovation Cell

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Dr. Vijay Raghavan,
Principal Scientific Adviser, Govt of India

Dr. Abhay Jere
Chief Innovation Officer, MHRD, Gol

Dr. Abhay Jere • 857 viewers

The discussion in progress, with Dr. VijayRaghavan on left and Dr. Abhay Jere on right