Of ethics, sustainability and spirituality

B-SCHOOLS GET INNOVATIVE Management institutes such as IIM Bangalore, IIM Lucknow and ISB Hyderabad are looking beyond academic studies to offer unique programmes that are aimed at adding value to an MBA education

Arjuna’s arguments against a battle and Lord Krishna’s response to him not just highlight the essence of the Bhagavad Gita but are now part of the curriculums at some of the country’s leading B schools, which are introducing novel and innovative modules and courses to make management lessons more interesting.

LESSONS IN SPIRITUALITY IIM Bangalore, for instance, has recently started a two-month elective course called ‘management paradigms from the Bhagavad Gita’ that aims at identifying some of the common problems that individuals and organisations face and illustrates the usefulness of the Gita in addressing some of these problems.

“It is a 36-hour course spread across six weeks with a focus on the contemporary relevance of the Bhagavad Gita. It has modules such as meditation as a tool for self-management, role of yoga in addressing stress and burnout of managers and spirituality in business. Most MBA programmes are skewed towards organisational skills with little focus on the individual. We aim to change that through this programme, says Ramnath Bhat, professor of operations management, IIM A. The notion of inspirational leadership as evident in the Gita will be introduced in the course.

Other B schools like IIM Rohtak and Mumbai-based SP Jain Institute of Management Research (SPJIMR) have new plans too. IIM R is starting a course called ‘leap incorporation’, which has elements and insights from spiritual texts like the Bhagavad Gita and gives them a management context. It is being offered in a modular format to first year MBA students and is spaced over six months.

“It includes teaching through corporate theatre, outdoor challenges, and autobiography and self-disclosure projects,” says Debashis Chatterjee, director, IIM R. IIM Lucknow, on the other hand, has a compulsory credit course titled the ‘Science of Spirituality’ as part of its MBA programme. It is likely to be made part of the PGDM programme too.

KARMA YOGA TO CSR Another interesting one is the Karma Yoga Leadership Experiential Programme for the students of Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai. The programme is designed for students to connect with ground realities and experimentally learn transformational leadership, besides introducing them to social responsibility.

Karma Yoga acts as a real life practical laboratory for the students to learn and experience the power of transformational leadership.

GOING GREEN MBA institutes are also focusing on environmental issues. IIM Lucknow is offering a course on sustainability management which is designed to equip managers with skills to handle various sustainability challenges. It also helps them come up with policy relevant results.

“After the launch of the Dow Jones Sustainability Index in 1999, which has been evaluating the sustainability performance of the largest 2,000 companies listed on the exchange, Dow Jones Global Total Stock Market Index, there has been increasing awareness of environmental issues in general. This is further reflected in the SSE’s recent launch of two indices titled Greenex and Carbonex evaluating several green operational parameters, including carbon performances,” says Vishnu Kanduk, senior associate dean, academic programmes, at ISB, Hyderabad.

Some of the courses the institute offers include total quality management and lean production, sustainable business operations: value creation and environmental considerations.

ETHICALLY SPEAKING Ethics is also an important component of the B-school programmes. At ISB, it is an important component of its leadership development course of the one-year PG programme. Important elements of the subject are embedded in a course called, Government Business and Society. Through these courses, students learn to identify sensitive issues and understand their impact on various stakeholders.

“We have a module on corporate governance and governance of social enterprises and NGOs, which hone sections on ethics and human rights aspects, issues such as child labour, gender equality and sexual harassment at the workplace are also addressed.

“We have created combinations such as ethics and financial accounting and ethics and supply chain management. Corporate social responsibility and corporate governance have also been incorporated these aspects. Ethics is not just a red-good factor; it is also a risk factor for companies,” says Meena Gullar, director, Centre for Sustainability Management and Social Entrepreneurship, Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai.

KARMA YOGA
- Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai, offers Karma Yoga Leadership Experiential Programme

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ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS
- ISB Hyderabad offers include sustainable business: operations, value creation and environmental considerations.

A Sunil sculpture at the IIM Lucknow campus. IIM Bangalore has started an elective course, ‘management paradigms from the Bhagavad Gita’.