



# MANAGING EDUCATION

DR. BALA V BALACHANDRAN



*Evoathu Uraivadhu Ulakam Ulakaththodu  
Aovathu Uraivadhu Arivu  
The man of true knowledge understands  
how the World moves, and moves accordingly  
-Thirukkural (Kural 426)*

“With determination and know-how, one can move the world”, explains Prof Bala V Balachandran, who has done nothing short of that. He moved with the world, gaining knowledge from every quarter, and then dared to move it himself, leaving behind him a trail of success - the most recent being Great Lakes Institute of Management (GLIM). The granite globe at the entrance of the Institute is perhaps a reference to this.

Started in 2004 in a small rented space in Saidapet, Chennai, Great Lakes Institute of Management was meant to be Chennai’s answer to the Indian Institutes of Management. Today the Institute stands on a sprawling 30 acre platinum-rated green campus close to Mahabalipuram. The architecture and design elements give an expansive feeling, echoing the “Global Mind-set, Indian Roots” motto of the Institute.

Rated amongst the top ten business schools in India, with an enviable line up of faculty members, GLIM is perhaps the first private institute to offer a One Year full time Graduate Program, aimed at candidates with 2-4 years’ work experience, who wish to shift to the top gear in their careers.

The Institute now also offers a two-year program; this program was started purely because of one very talented, gold-medal winning woman candidate, who the Institute did not wish to turn away because of her lack of work experience. This has gone on to the spawning of a program called SWIM, short for Successful Women in Management.

The Institute is a locus for incubation of Start-ups, with its annual Hyperion event. It is mandatory for every student of the



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two-year program to propose and incubate a business and implement an employment

program, no matter what the outcome. The Institute has also adopted nearly twenty one villages around the campus and students are required to spend one day of the week interacting and working with the villagers in a compulsory program called Karma Yoga. All these and many more innovative programs are designed to arm the student with grass root level technical knowledge and communication skills. Dr. Bala, the founder & Dean of GLIM states with pride and joy that every student of GLIM got placed as soon as they finished their graduation. And, the well-knit alumni

fund various projects and also come in as guest lecturers.

Professor Emeritus of J L Kellogg School of Management, Uncle Bala, as he is affectionately called by his students, is an engaging talker, and has endless anecdotes to recount as he talks about the humble beginnings (his native Pudukkottai), his ambitions and current engagements, most of which revolve around GLIM and its student body which he refers to as his family. His passion for studies and education stems not surprisingly from a healthy diet of Tamil





films, from which he quotes dialogues and scenes effortlessly. "Movies are what kept me thinking & dreaming when I was young and gave me my positivity" he said. The metaphorical references, with sayings and quotes that abound on the campus are Bala's way of cultivating morality and keeping the young minds of his students grounded to reality which he says is rare in the current lot of movies.

Bala found his natural passion to teach, at Annamalai University from where he graduated in the early 1960s. By 1967, he had arrived at University of Dayton, Ohio to pursue his higher studies, leaving behind in India, a young wife and child. Memories of sufferance in childhood motivated him to complete his Doctorate from Carnegie-Mellon University and in 1973 he joined the Kellogg School of Management. He was soon made Chairman of the Department of Accounting Information and Management and later became Director.

"Everyone needs a mentor", he says and refers to Donald P Jacobs (Dean Emeritus of Kellogg's) as his mentor. It was during their many discussions that his mentor referred to the need to create Institutes that could explore and create business opportunities based on the culture and ethnic diversities in various countries. "While the outlook has to be global, management has to pay attention to the grassroots", says Dr. Bala.

Dr. Bala published papers and travelled the world giving lectures, which soon caught the attention of the Indian Government. The first opportunity to implement his mentor's advice arrived in the form of the Management Development Institute in Gurgaon. Bala helped set up the Institute and design the courses that were to impart lessons in global economy to government officials. He was conferred the Padmashri in the year 2001. Soon, he was invited by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to set up a state of the art institute

of management in Hyderabad- Indian School of Business was born.

Goaded on by a desire to see such a School of Business in Chennai, Bala founded GLIM. "Education is like an ocean, limitless and sweet. Taking away a drop makes no difference to it", is his metaphorical reference to the Great lakes of North America. "The lakes are huge like an ocean, but the waters sweet. Also the persons who funded and encouraged the formation of GLIM are from around the Great lakes. So, I dedicate the institute to them." Says Dr. Bala. The lecture halls and classrooms are named after the "ocean" lakes like Michigan, Veeranam etc.

Bala's philosophy in life comes very close to the purusharthas that are at the core of Vedanta- dharma, artha, kama, moksha- his philosophy is, "Learn-as much as you can when you are young, Earn- every penny that you can in your middle years, Return- every penny that you earned to a good cause because, when you leave, you take nothing with you."

Dr. Bala is an Institution by himself, prides himself on his knowledge, but is humbled by the challenges that made him the enigma that he is.

He has come full circle in funding his own education and that of his siblings, to setting up state of the art Institutes that impart world class management education.

He has shown young people that, "Look and look hard, you will find." When people find it hard to live even one dream, he has realised every dream of his including a wisp of a performance in a Tamil film that he announces with equal joy.

He has been an exemplar of discipline and virtue.

**He is a true Champion of Chennai.**

**ARUNA SURESH**