

New Chapter – New Innings

On 16th March, 2020, I completed 20 years of service at Mahindra & Mahindra. I thought this occasion would be the perfect time to look back on the paths that I travelled as I move forward into a new business role.

New Year is about new beginning and new innings. I am on the threshold of my new innings, which coincides with the Tamil new year. Let me first talk a little about my past.

All throughout, my life has been a journey of constant change. However, there are certain things that have remained constant and unchangeable. My values, my family, etc. have remained intact but what has constantly changed are the locations. Even the roles that I have played have constantly changed. I won't be wrong to state that I stayed in nearly all states in the country. Nor if I say that in an organization I have, by and large, played every role, in many functions. It has been an interesting and fascinating journey because as a CA, I donned multiple hats, in sales & marketing, manufacturing HR and IT, international operations to name a few. It has been a rich experience to understand all the functions and the importance and nitty-gritties of these functions.

So, I must confess that I have thoroughly enjoyed staying in every state that I lived. Each place has left an indelible mark in my memory, as well as my heart. Similarly, every function has imprinted in my heart fond memories that I will cherish for many years to come. So, these are the beautiful reminiscences I carry from the past. As I move ahead from these changes, I admit that they have given me diverse inputs that help me stand in good state as I look forward.

Like a hero in any hindi movie, I have played multiple roles in my journey of 20 years in M&M. I started off as a transformation agent in HR along with IT. Then I moved on to doing business planning, policy deployment and cost management and was a key anchor in the Deming Award process. Later, it was with strategy and international operations. After many stints, I returned to a staff function which included M&A, treasury, corporate finance & accounts and finally graduated to the CFO of the Group. Having spent around 7 years in the capacity of a Group CFO function I think it is time to move on to something new. For a while now I have been contemplating to do something else and this new role came in at the right time.

I think it is time to take a pause and do a little bit of a rewind and talk of my journey at M&M, how I have gained being here and what M&M has bestowed on me. I am most fortunate that I have found great role models. I remember them with very great fondness, those who took upon themselves to be my Mentors. I once had penned down a poem which goes like this..

आया हूँ बड़ी दूर से

खाता हूँ करेला

मूँछों पे ताओ दे के

लड़ता हूँ अकेला

But I noticed that in M&M there were many people who came forward to take up the mentor role and who never let you feel *akhela*. These mentors were the true *johoris* who vouched for the employees and the talent knowing their true potential which was apt for the future of the organization. I take great pride having known and worked with the likes of Mr. Anand Mahindra, Late Mr. K J Davasia, Mr. Bharat Doshi, and Mr. Anjanikumar Choudhari to name a few, who played their part in shaping me and making me the person who I am today.

However, the biggest asset in my entire career has been my team. Whatever the function or the role that I undertook, the constant has been the excellent support of my team. I have very often mentioned, and it remains a fact, that I have always journeyed further and longer because I have a great team. To quote Isaac Newton - If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.

I have many memories, milestones & landmarks to carry with great amount of pride. I also truly appreciate and recognize that while I might take the bow, it is the team who has done the nine yards more than me many times. My team members can tell you that I was and still am a bundle of uncertainty and I just act & curate the thoughts they bring to me. I only give them my blessing and full support, but it is they who go and implement. But the fact remains that both creation and execution is being done by the team and that team would recognize that I was just lucky that I was their leader. This has happened often enough so I shouldn't be very humble but not be boastful enough to say that it is their sole claim to fame, mine has been a part but the team has made it complete.

Now talking about the forward i.e. the new field or role in the mobility sector. In the new world, Mobility Services are going to define the future of the business. I am delighted that there is a cusp called electric vehicles and shared mobility coming together as part of sunrise industries that will garner a new future for the sector. Obviously, execution will be the key and again the team will define how fast, how large how big we grow. I am already excited and looking forward to this challenge tremendously. It will be unfair on my part to only talk about mobility, but we have other equally large nuggets of gold. Here the gold mine that I am referring is logistics business. Mahindra Logistics is a listed company which is in the pipeline of becoming the heartbeat of goods & people. The for the pre-owned After Market which we must leverage our largest networks and properties like IBB (Indian Blue Book) to become the value creator of the group.

The past dealings with ambiguity and Unknown Unknowns has somewhat prepared us to survive and thrive in VUCA world amid uncertain future. The current pandemic and the repercussion it will have on the economy both India and world, is without any parallel. But we have the best team and the philosophy of Rise to guide us.

We have many things to look forward to and a lot of hard work and toil to do and sweat, tears and blood before we reach. I am looking forward to this exciting journey. I am on my way knowing that the road will not be easy and smooth but with bumpy turns.

However, I know for sure that with the batman vehicle and that of my team we will carry on and rise above the uncertainties..

Thank you all and good luck to all of us.

V S Parthasarathy

14th April, 2020