



Beating her own clay pot

Ghatam exponent Sukanya Ramgopal speaks about her new book and the travails of being a woman percussion artist **Page 4**



12-year-old protests heavy school bags

Rugved Raikwar of Vidya Niketan School in Chandrapur says State government's apathy forced him to go on hunger strike **Page 6**

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Founder
Nilima Achwal,
Gauravi Lobo

Founded
2015

Funding
Bootstrapped and first round from family and friends. Capital: Rs. 25 lakh

Employees
Three full-time, one part-time

Web
ieshalearning.com

Let's talk about sex, kids



Made in Mumbai tells the stories of enterprises born in the city. The series looks first for interesting and relevant ideas: novel ways of looking at existing opportunities or problems, even concepts that address needs unfelt until now. The next box we tick is solidity: the track record of the enterprise thus far, or if it's very new, that of the founders and investors. And the last is potential: is the business scalable (or in the case of social enterprises, replicable)?

Nilima Achwal, Founder and CEO with Gauravi Lobo, Head, Operations at Iesha Learning



There's a huge gap between what adolescents find out about sex and what they should know. And therein lies a business opportunity

SHUBHA SHARMA

The teens are a time of raging hormones and physiological and emotional changes. Add to that the three-letter word that both teachers and students tiptoe around, but which nevertheless finds expression in catcalls, obscene remarks, harassment and bullying. Teaching a class full of 13-year-olds can be a nightmare. Now imagine teaching them about sex.

Of course adolescents know about sex. But the information they get is rarely authentic or healthy. At least 45 per cent of urban males in the 15-24-year age group in India report having watched pornography, according to the 'Youth in India: Situation and Needs' report by the Government of India, based on a study by the International Institute for Population

Sciences, Mumbai and the Population Council, New Delhi. At least 90 per cent of those surveyed claimed they needed more information on sex but didn't know where to find it.

And that's what Iesha Learning sees as a need and an opportunity.

Sex and fun

The Youth in India study found that just three per cent of urban youth discuss romantic relationships or reproductive processes with their parents. And 72 per cent of youngsters hide personal relationships from figures of authority. Schools usually don't go further than covering reproductive biology. Iesha, which calls itself a one-stop resource for adolescents and educators on sexuality, takes adolescents beyond that: how they can forge a healthy identity for themselves, make the right choices, respect their peers, themselves, and their bodies.

"There's almost no structured way that kids learn about things like reproduction, menstruation, gender, consent when they reach puberty," says Nilima Achwal, Iesha's founder and CEO. "A lot of the social issues we see today in India like rape or misogyny can be traced back to the fact that children are consuming the wrong kind of information."

"Since we're young, we have a rapport with them," says Gauravi Lobo, Head, Operations and Chief Taboo Officer at Iesha. (The average age of the founding team is 26).

It starts with a 'safe' environment for the workshops, where children can open up and ask tough



Youngsters participate in an Iesha Learning workshop on sex education. — PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

questions. Iesha uses the co-working space, Ministry of New, in South Mumbai.

It provides what it calls 'fun, interactive, and safe' workshops for adolescents (see box), and a curriculum for schools that cover puberty, reproduction, gender roles, LGBTQ issues, online safety, filtering media messages, among other topics. And it uses fun and games. The method is the key.

Getting the mix right

Iesha's actors, the cultural context and tone are all Indian. "There's no India-specific content available on the Internet for sexuality and gender education," Achwal says. "We've created one of the only comprehensive repositories of information customised to the Indian context." While Iesha draws much of its inspiration from the research and educational pedagogy from the Scandinavian countries, it marries these with curricula designed by the Government

of India.

For instance the education and legal system in the Scandinavian countries make sure both genders are treated equally, and there is an element of fun and openness in their curriculums. But their conversations can often be irrelevant to the Indian context.

Take romantic love, for instance. "It's great to address it in small amounts in the classroom, because it does happen," Lobo says. "But coming in and saying that you should only marry for love is silly. In India, you marry for a lot of reasons — for family, for religion — and there's nothing wrong with any of those things. So bridging those two is important."

They encourage children to take their own decisions, but above all, Lobo says, "We're very careful with not imposing our ideology because in India, a classroom is so diverse. There are people from different religions and backgrounds. The idea

of our course is that all this exists in the world out there and it's up to you to decide how you feel about it. What you have to remember is that everyone has to be respected, everyone has a sto-

Iesha takes adolescents beyond reproductive biology into topics like gender roles and choices

ry, a life, and opinions, and conflicting opinions can co-exist."

Breaking through

Parents can be their greatest supporters, they can also act as a wall, so the team makes it part of their task to rope in parents too. The idea is to explain how they can talk to their children as they're going through adolescence, how to establish a rapport and communicate taboo topics. As Achwal puts

it, "Because you see a massive generational divide between parents and kids."

One common misperception they hear from parents is that sex education is a way to teach children how to have sex. They also hear about the fear that after these workshops, the kids will be even more curious, and have more questions for the parents.

Lobo's favourite line from a parent is, 'My child is very innocent.'

"It's almost funny, because we found the parent has a completely different idea about their child and sometimes you can't believe they live in the same house. 'I'm very close to my daughter. She doesn't do anything without my permission,' said one, but the daughter said something completely different: 'My mother makes so many rules for me I just don't tell her what I do.'"

Challenges all the way

The gap can get in the way of business for Iesha. Parent-teacher associations have a strong hold on schools, so signing up a school is a long process. "It's a very, very long sales cycle. We're not selling them cake. We're selling a nuanced sort of thing. So even if the school board and the teachers are on board, sometimes if the parents don't buy in, the school just has to give up and say, 'We really want it, but we can't do anything.'"

Children can be resistant as well, but they typically ease into the process. And class teachers notice the transformation. In a low-income school in Mumbai, a Std VIII Teach for India classroom saw misbehaviour, harassment and bullying of teachers, especially from the boys. Iesha did a course in the classroom, and later a focus group with the teachers and the children. The teachers said that the rowdiest, most disrespectful children had turned into the most respectful and mature

ones. Achwal says, "When we interviewed the boys, we had them telling us, 'Before, we thought it was right to force a girl to say 'yes.' Now, after the course, I know that it's wrong. If I like a girl, I ask her first and if she says no, I'll accept it and move on.'"

Growing pains

Besides schools, Iesha also partners with voluntary organisations across the country by giving out content on subscription. For example, it does not reach out directly to Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation-run schools, for instance; instead it partners organisations like Teach for India and Catalyst for Social Action, and 45 orphanages all over India.

Aside from the direct interactions — which of course have their impact — Iesha also plans to start using social media. Next month, they will kick off a podcast series, No Taboos, with audio company Indus Vox Media, targeted at young adults. It will talk about everything from love, sex, relationships, to gender and dress codes in colleges. Also on the to-do list, YouTube videos.

The business goal: make Iesha the go-to resource for sexuality education for educators and parents. To do that, they aim to continue to prove that the children they interact with become active voices in their communities, where they feel confident and empowered by virtue of having made the right decisions.

"They're not beholden to certain ways of acting just because the media is telling them so," Achwal says. "They're practising consent, they feel good about their bodies, and the rest of their peers follow them. I feel this is a ripple effect. In my vision we can reach hundreds of thousands of students across the country if we tie up with the government, with training institutes."

IESHA LEARNING'S COURSES

AGE: 11-12 years

GROWN-UP STUFF

A five-week programme for pre-teens that helps them navigate their changing bodies

FOR PARENTS

THE TRICKY TEEN YEARS: A WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS

A two-hour workshop designed to equip parents to educate their children, answer those tough questions, and be a supportive figure during adolescence

AGE: 13-15 years

SMART CHOICES: Young Thought Leadership Programme

A five-week programme for teenagers to help them make safe and healthy choices, including discussions about safety, consent, sexually transmitted infections, peer pressure, bullying, gender roles, filtering media messages, and alternative sexualities

A new script for India-Pakistan relations

The Uri attack has changed the way India reacts to Pak-linked terror attacks, says author Toby Dalton

JAYANT SRIRAM

MUMBAI: The aftermath of a terror attack on Indian soil predictable: pointers to the complicity of Pakistan, rhetoric about how we should handle our problematic western neighbour with force, demands for economic and cultural sanctions, and so on. But the days after the Uri attacks saw a dramatic departure from the well-worn script.

The boycott of the forthcoming SAARC conference was followed, on Thursday, by news that the Indian military had carried out a series of 'surgical strikes' across the Line of Control. This was a serious departure from India's policy of strategic restraint, putting us in uncharted territory. Now, after years of stasis, a new set of consequences and outcomes are now up for debate.

It was almost prescient, then, that *The Hindu* on Thursday met with Toby Dalton, one of the authors of a new book, *Not War, Not Peace* (Oxford University Press), that addresses the question of what India can do to prevent such attacks. Mr. Dalton is co-director of the nuclear policy pro-



Toby Dalton hopes his book is ready by policy makers in India. — PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE

gramme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and his co-author George Perkovich is vice-president for studies at the same organisation. Their book is based on a series of interviews with serving and retired officials from both India and Pakistan, through which they seek to analyse the implications of possible Indian policies and capabilities to deter and to respond to another major terror attack.

There are no theories in existing international relations literature that offer an guidelines on how to deal with the India-Pakistan is-

suess, Mr Dalton says. "Much of the literature is written by western theorists about the Soviet Union and America [...] both very large states that are geographically separated, both having nuclear weapons, but directing their conflict in areas that were unlikely to lead to direct confrontation. Nothing in that literature informs us about how we should think about terrorism or non-state actors as a potential catalyst for conflict. Conversely, most of the literature about dealing with terrorism doesn't imagine states with nuclear weapons and how that affects counter-terrorism strategy.

On top of that, here you have two states that border each other and have images of each other — particularly in Pakistan — where they think of the neighbour as an existential threat. This is just a unique, difficult situation in which to think about ways to bring stability such that neither state is seeking through violence or other means to destabilise the other."

Through their conversations on both sides, Mr. Dalton says, he and Mr. Perkovich have tried to reflect on and work through the logic and the capabilities on the table. "What we find in many cases is that there is a

real tension between actions that would have a symbolic and punitive effect but no long term effect on the problem, versus actions that might have some strategic effect but are also very risky in terms of the potential for escalation of conflict." By the same token, he argues, just seeking peace without the ability to coerce doesn't seem likely. In his estimation, it is a combination of factors, such as having a stronger defensive capability, and a policy on Kashmir that makes it harder for Pakistan — in an attempt to internationalise the problem — to point to what India is doing there. "There has to be a balance between having coercive options and but also finding ways to mobilise international opinion and changing opinion within Pakistan with regard to the state supporting terror strikes. It's the combination that might provide the motivation, any one of them alone is insufficient."

Pointing to unsubstantiated news reports last week that Indian commandos crossed into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and killed 20 terrorists, Mr. Dalton asks, "What would be the long-term consequences of an action like that? It might satisfy the desire for punishment of terrorists, and it might actually affect the capability of a particular group, but it doesn't fundamentally change things in terms of motivating Pakistan. What we're suggesting is that if you want to find means of motivation, many of those have to come

There has to be a balance between having coercive options and finding ways to mobilise international opinion and changing opinion within Pakistan

Toby Dalton

from economic and diplomatic measures and those involving civil society. Putting out only coercive options come with the risk of escalation, and they also don't help build and sustain a narrative in Pakistan that challenges encouragement of non-state groups that attack India." (Just a few hours after our conversation, the surgical strikes were confirmed.)

Mr. Dalton hopes the book is read by people responsible for policy in India, and that it will help them think about this problem in a more structured way, in particular, looking beyond the immediate desire for punishment and to have a framework to talk through the consequences of certain actions. "A lot of what is in the book are not new ideas but just a place where they can all be collected. To the extent that the academics and experts community and journalists and others also spend a lot of time after events like the Uri attack thinking and talking about what to do, perhaps this analysis can help in those discussions too."

WEATHER WATCH

(Maximum temperature in six metros yesterday)

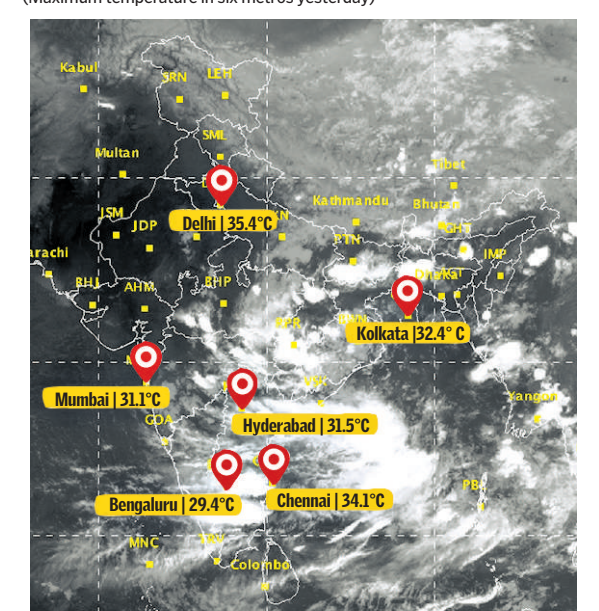


Image & Data: India Meteorological Department

Forecast for Friday: Heavy rain at isolated places very likely over east Madhya Pradesh

	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min		
Agartala	34.7	26.8	Hubballi	28.0	22.0	New Delhi	35.4	26.6
Ahmedabad	34.9	24.0	Hyderabad	31.5	22.2	Patna	32.9	23.1
Allahabad	27.8	24.4	Imphal	33.3	22.6	Port Blair	27.1	24.0
Aizawl	30.2	10.9	Jaipur	36.5	24.9	Pune	27.6	19.4
Bengaluru	29.4	21.4	Kohima	25.6	19.1	Puducherry	32.0	22.8
Bhopal	32.1	23.2	Kolkata	32.4	25.2	Raipur	31.7	24.7
Bhubaneswar	30.6	24.8	Kochi	29.0	25.2	Ranchi	30.7	23.1
Chandigarh	33.6	25.0	Kozhikode	31.2	25.9	Shillong	24.8	15.0
Chennai	34.1	23.6	Kurnool	32.0	24.2	Shirna	23.7	14.5
Coimbatore	32.8	23.3	Lucknow	30.9	23.3	Srinagar	28.6	13.6
Dehradun	31.7	22.1	Madurai	35.2	23.9	Vijayawada	33.4	25.5
Gangtok	22.4	16.7	Mangaluru	30.2	25.1	Visakhapatnam	29.3	25.5
Goa	30.8	24.6	Mumbai	31.1	24.4	Thiruvananthapuram	31.8	25.2
Guwahati	35.4	25.4	Mysuru	30.0	20.5	Tiruchi	36.5	26.5