

If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there...

It's a statement I think about often. In my life, I can count five times that I have been sure of what I wanted to do, and took the roads to those destinations. In between, it has been largely a process of discovery.

Five academic degrees, four companies, three continents, and one startup later, I find myself at the crossroads again. I've learnt a few things to date. That most roads don't lead anywhere, and most of the time, we don't think about where we are going. Life is a series of journeys to different destinations, with different passengers and changing scenery. I know where I want to get to, but I wonder how to begin the next one.

Yet it is an exciting time. I'm 35, and I've made a list of possible destinations, each with a different theme. Purpose, Entrepreneurship. Leadership. Achievement, Mission. These thoughts swirl around in my mind like snowflakes in Central Park in January. And somewhere in the snowdrift, hides a path that could show the way.

For most of us, our journey did truly begin at Pilani. BITS gave us the engine to power this trip. We bid our goodbyes in Vidya Vihar and went about our ways. Only recently we've chanced upon this global BITS community. We've realized that this community can give us with extra fuel and a new set of tires for our individual trips. Maybe even a tune-up or new directions.

BITSAA's mission is to inspire us to continue up the path. A number of initiatives shall help in the quest. The alumni directory (which is finally underway) will connect us to others in ways we did not even imagine. The bits2bschool initiative will ensure that you raise the bar on your MBA dream. We want you to think of Harvard, INSEAD, IIM-Ahmedabad, of the world's greatest schools. In research, dream of the Nobel, the Fields Medal, of the Lemelson-MIT Prize. In business, achieve the heights of Vivek, Rajesh and Mukesh. Desire no less than Padma Shri's and Knighthoods for your work. Choose your roads carefully.

As we speed along the highways of life, or navigate the treacherous turns, we may find other BITSians. Walking; stuck; lacchaing; waiting. Stop and talk to them. Help them. Give them a ride. Your paths may cross again.

In my personal journey through life, I am accompanied by my wife and son. Together as a family we see the tops of gleaming minarets in the

distance, hear sounds through the fog, and are thrilled by the images of these destinations near and far. I want to spend time figuring out how I can clear a path to these new possibilities. And when my son leaves to follow his own path, just like I did at 17 years of age, I want to bid him farewell with the confidence that he will be safe; but satisfied that I would have taught him well for the journey that lies before him.

This magazine was a journey of personal discovery. It reminded me how much I enjoy to write, to work with like-minded BITSians. In past editions I spoke of the vast greatness, of purpose or even a path paved with gold. I must admit that for Sandpaper, some of these thoughts may never have crossed my mind.

When we first started Sandpaper, there were a few stragglers. I look back and see so many following, stronger and fitter than I am. I have decided to hand over the wheel, to become a passenger. But I let others pass with mixed feelings. I am saddened because I will miss our creative process that has made these two years so much fun.

But I am also enthused, imagining the mornings I will wake up, check my email and find a new, unread edition. When I pick up my coffee and settle back with the smell of print still fresh from my ageing HP printer, I will turn the pages and remember the days that all this began.

I am entrusting Sandp in very good hands. Sandeep has the drive, the vision, the abilities and the support of a very energetic and talented team to continue our mission.

I am off on my journey. But before I go, I'd like to thank my team for all their hard work, thank those who emailed or called with words of encouragement, and thank especially all of you for reading what we had to say.

Chalta hoon. I'll be seeing you around.

Anupendra Sharma
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Pic: With Rohan in Ithaca

