

Child leader standing on a precipice: a case study of NextGenInnov8

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Aditya Pachpande, an 11-year-old boy from the metropolitan city called Pune, the pioneering techno hub of India, was a very curious and compassionate child. His father, Sandeep Pachpande, a Harvard Alumnus and a social worker, was the founder of a renowned professional institute engaged in the education sector. Aditya obviously grew up to be a true Samaritan who would always be ready to lend a helping hand to anyone. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, he felt the need to do something for the local vendors, and at a tender age came up with a very innovative solution “Surakhsha Box” which could help them sanitise their currency notes and products that they sold. The success of this project motivated him to start his own venture called NextGenInnov8 as an adolescent so that he could scale up his idea, serve the community as well as inspire and nurture a sustainability mindset among school children.

The journey was certainly not easy. The policies and ecosystem in India did not support children to start their business ventures until 18 years of age. Did Aditya get a patent for his innovation? Did he get approval to start his own venture? Did he choose social transformation over profit maximisation or frugal innovation over product perfection? Did he endorse crowdfunding or angel investing? Was Aditya successful in bringing systemic changes in education and governance in India and inspiring more child innovators? Which path did he finally take? Was he finally accepted as a child chief executive officer (CEO)?

Samaritan Aditya's growing-up years

Aditya, an 11-year-old, was not the quintessential junior high school kid. He had been a dreamer all along. Elon Musk appealed to him more than musk melon. Steve Jobs was the kind of “job” he aspired to. Aditya's father, Sandeep wondered – “My son is ahead of his time. Age cannot be any criterion for rejection. Would institutions ever acknowledge my innovative boy as a child leader? Will my child become a teen CEO? Will he get accepted?”

Born into a typical Indian middle-class family in Pune, India, Aditya's paternal grandmother managed a famous conglomerate of higher education institutions along with her 40-year-old dynamic son, Sandeep. The progressive septuagenarian granny had proudly christened the new-born grandchild “Aditya” which meant the sun. She had proclaimed – “he is born to make India shine.” Being in the education sector, the Pachpande family was quite mindful of their role, as they witnessed India awaken to entrepreneurship with its call for “Aatmanirbhar Bharat”, a clarion call by the Indian Prime Minister meaning a self-reliant India. While Sandeep, Aditya's dad, an acclaimed academician and a Harvard alumnus was leading the family's passion project, Aditya's mother contributed to inculcating sustainability with her green hands. She would encourage everyone to follow eco-friendly habits and frugal innovation in day-to-day activities. The family believed in sustainable values, ethics and minimalism, and Aditya appreciated the worth of everything. He had

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never seen household waste go into waste bins in his home. They would be put to some use again. Aditya's sister was in awe of her brother's perseverance and compassion. He was her role model, but she would sometimes get irritated too when Aditya was often not available for fun or vacations. To pursue his dream, Aditya gave up typical teenage activities to work on his projects, spending weekends and holidays at workshops and seminars and always engaged in reading and learning. However, Aditya's vision for a better world was infectious, and his actions to make it a reality inspired him to contribute to community work.

Aditya the curious, compassionate and creative champ

At the age of 14 years, Aditya did not give up dreaming even at the risk of getting labelled a maverick. He foresaw no problem if he "asked too many questions." It pinched him that his curiosity always seemed to annoy others. "Is age indeed a barrier? Isn't it just a number?" He felt discouraged; but, he wanted to do something for the lovely people around him. Alas! He would get pushed into trying hard to fit into the limiting social norm of following elders without questioning them. The grown-ups would just not let him be. They would say, "Children play at this age and don't ask too many questions!" Aditya would say to his elders, "Why wouldn't you help me find answers? Believe me, I have read all of these." Aditya's mother would try to make the elders understand "Aditya's questions are never just questions; they are the beginning of his quests to understand and innovate." The three generations of Pachpande family always stood by Aditya, whose intense focus on solving real-world problems from such a young age meant that the family discussions often revolved around topics not typically found at a dinner table filled with children. For the family, supporting Aditya meant learning alongside him, understanding his vision and sometimes being his advocate in spaces where his ideas were too radical for his age.

On a scorching summer afternoon of 20 May 2020, the pandemic lockdown, after virtual school was over, Aditya tugged his iPad and walked up to his father. He was curious to seek an explanation of the underlying meaning of the content he had just read in a research paper. He read the lines aloud to his dad – "Unfortunately, while the logic of focusing on leadership development of children rather than adults is compelling, there are unanswered questions that mean it is not presently possible." "Dad, can there be no child leaders? Really? But why not?" While growing up, Aditya always asked some "serious" innocent questions. More often than not, he would get shunned by the all-knowing elders. All he would hear was, "Are you kidding me?" because Aditya always had something up his sleeves that would surprise the elders (refer to [Exhibit 6](#) and [Figures E1](#) and [E2](#) of Graphic Novel of the case).

Sandeep was flabbergasted when he found that Aditya was reading a research paper that afternoon. "Research paper on Design Thinking? Really? Let me see! Come on!", he was furious. He just had a conversation with Aditya's chemistry teacher. She had complained that Aditya asked too many questions and distracted the other children too. The other teachers remarked, "Wears too many hats on his head. Watch out for his steps!" Aditya's teacher was concerned that his friends labelled him a show-off. She warned Sandeep that Aditya was not focusing on the course syllabus. She had spoken curtly, "His curiosity is not getting assessed in the exam. He must improve his chemistry grades. He must become an engineer" (refer to [Exhibit 6](#) and [Figure E3](#) of Graphic Novel).

Stuck in the mud

The headmaster was furious at Sandeep for not making Aditya focus on the topics outlined in the school syllabus. He had conveyed his displeasure – "Aditya is losing focus on studies. What will he do in the future? If you do not groom him well, he will not get admitted to a reputed school for higher education like you. Parents send their children to us as we

produce merit-rank holders and state toppers in board exams. More than half the class is a 10-pointer. I cannot damage my school's reputation. Don't you wish to see your son shine too like you did?" (refer to [Exhibit 6](#) and [Figure E4](#) of Graphic Novel).

For the prodigal Aditya, these challenges were glaring in the face. Aditya's schoolmates and teachers often rubbed him wrong, saying, "This is not in the scope of the school curriculum. Aditya, why are you focusing on things that will never be assessed in your school exam? Focus on getting good grades, an excellent college education, and a great job; dreams that can become reality. Look how your cousins are doing so well in the corporate world today: big fat salaries, foreign holidays, big cars, lavish homes." For Aditya, these were no pressing concerns. He knew he had to think of the whole universe. Aditya hated to hear such lines – "From where do you get these bags of questions? Are you planning to fail the next exam? Write the answer the teacher dictated in class so that you get good grades." "Oh, come on, don't worry about such stuff. You are too young for this and just focus on other priorities in life!" "Why do you want to pretend like a scientist? Be your age. You are just a 14-year-old boy. Don't be over-smart." His friends, neighbours, relatives, cousins and almost everyone else said these in unison. Aditya had to deal with these punches day in and day out (refer to [Exhibit 6](#) and [Figure E4](#) of Graphic Novel).

Like father like son

Fortunately, Aditya's father gave him unstinted support and was the most important pillar and guiding angel for him. A second-generation edupreneur, Sandeep was determined to provide Aditya with a launching pad early in his life. He would say, "I am so proud to have a son like you, Aditya. My son, you will shine bright and show the way as the Sun one day! I will walk on your baby steps to the moon, my baby!" Sandeep had even recalled his mother saying, "Your child Aditya is born to be the light-worker true to his name." How overwhelmed he had felt then. Sandeep would assure himself and deep within his heart he knew, "My son will shine like a Sun – he is Aditya! India should have its own Gretas and Malalas!" He cooled himself with some spicy, tangy cooler, mom's popular homemade Aam Panna (a spicy, cool drink made of smoked raw mango consumed in every Indian household to beat the scorching summer). Upon introspection, deep in his heart, didn't this father feel proud?" Sandeep was in awe that Aditya chose to read various scientific research papers during his summer holidays, while his schoolmates were busy playing outdoors or were engaged in the rut of completing holiday homework with their parents or playing games, chatting endlessly with them (refer to [Exhibit 6](#) and [Figure E1](#) of Graphic Novel).

Sandeep was quite proud that his son was very proactive and demonstrated far-out-of-the-box thinking. If he did not support, who will? So he decided to bridge the gap. Together they engaged in candid conversations. Sandeep would hear Aditya out, and always lend a listening ear to his thought process, ambitions, goals and future path. They both watched TED talks on design thinking, frugal innovation, social entrepreneurship, famous stories of change-makers and sustainable development goals. Aditya's mother stood by him and encouraged him reiterating Mahatma Gandhi's vision – "Be the change you want to see in the world! It is your world, Aditya. You deserve a better life. We owe you a sustainable world!"

Aditya, subconsciously, at such a tender age, was getting groomed to be a Samaritan. He was introduced to the social circles of great institutions such as Harvard, Babson, Oxford and Stanford and received valuable exposure. But acceptance did not come so easily. The more he engaged in these circles, the more he would realise that his age was becoming a barrier. However, he still stood firm and was determined that the perception would change someday soon. Aditya started exploring courses at globally reputed schools on sustainability, leadership and entrepreneurship. He could not find any courses for children. He still persistently connected with various schools and did not stop persuading academic

program counsellors. He would mostly be told it was too early for him and no school had courses for children. He would have to wait. Aditya was unstoppable. He did not stop trying no matter how many times he would hear a no.

A 12-year-old Aditya eyes Harvard

Another day. Another no. Staring at the computer screen, Aditya was exasperated. “Oh Damn! Here is another rejection! God, why did you do this? It’s been my dream to start my own company.” Aditya, an inquisitive child, knew nothing about business or entrepreneurship, but he would stay focused and work hard on learning the concept. Thus, he stumbled upon a course called the Summer Business Academy at Harvard by Harvard Student Agencies. He submitted his application as fast as he possibly could, and in a matter of a few days, he received an email saying,

Dear Aditya,

Your application is brilliant, but we cannot accept you into the programme because you do not fit our age criteria. You are too young to pursue this course!

However, he was determined to do this course and needed to convey the same temperament to the concerned faculty members at Harvard Student Agencies. Not the one to give up easily, he finally convinced the team to give him a Skype interview. When the professors saw his diligence, determination and futuristic vision, they could not deny him the opportunity. This time it was a yes. Screaming out loud, Aditya exclaimed – “I got accepted at Harvard. I put my best foot forward and got accepted, Dad.”

Rejoicing this news which he had been waiting to hear for so long, he rushed to express gratitude to all his mentors who had written a Letter of Reference for him on many occasions. He started reading some of these aloud. The head of venture capital and start-ups at Google India had written-“He has demonstrated excellence in all that he puts his mind to, be it entrepreneurship, keynote speeches, academics, designing an experiment, collaborating with others, or writing and presenting research papers at one of the best engineering college like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and top business school such as Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Bangalore. He also has the rare distinction of being the youngest ever speaker at the Amazon Conference in Seattle and I understand that Amazon Web Services (AWS) is keen to collaborate with him in his entrepreneur venture Nextgeninnov8.” Another senior professor said – “Beyond his achievements, it is Aditya’s character that I find most compelling. His resilience, humility, and eagerness to learn are qualities that resonate with him. I have witnessed his growth from a curious student to a key speaker at global forums, and now, as a change maker shaping the future of education and social entrepreneurship.”

While studying there, he realised why Harvard was the best in the world. First of all, the teachers there cared a lot for the students. They were proactive and empathetic. More importantly, they gave real-life and practical examples using case studies. And perhaps most importantly, they taught students how to apply the skills they learned in real life and the future. He was happy that he gained a lot of insights from this course, although he had a sinking feeling in his gut. “My friends, family, and peers do not have such exposure. So many deserving kids of my age throughout Asia and the rest of the world could not have access to amazing opportunities and exposure.” This feeling haunted him day in and day out. Just as a leader and a change-maker would think, he reached out to the Harvard Student Agencies team and convinced them to partner with them and promote their courses all over Asia. As a result, he achieved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Harvard Student Agencies’ officials so that many deserving kids and teens around the world would be able to get the same opportunity to learn those crucial skills as he did.

Aditya represented India as one of the youngest delegates for the Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations (HPAIR) Asia Conference “Reinventing with Resilience”, held in August 2021. This platform allowed him to connect with and learn from global thought leaders, including Nobel Prize winners. He shone brightly on stage and rubbed shoulders with eminent speakers, founders, Fortune 100 CEOs, global business leaders and fellow delegates from across the globe. To date, Aditya has had the privilege to learn business at Harvard, entrepreneurship at Babson, design thinking at Stanford and economics and management at Oxford. How proudly co-presidents of HPAIR had written a testimonial for Aditya – “We commend Aditya for his active participation and leadership during the conference, consistently exceeding our expectations for what it means to be a true team player and engaged learner. It is no understatement to say Aditya was out of the ordinary amongst the delegation, as Aditya networked diligently with our keynote speakers. We are confident Aditya Pachpande has outstanding potential to grow into a global leader.”

The turning point

While the pandemic could be associated with negative feelings for everyone, it gave Aditya the perspective to look at things through a brighter lens. It was time to act and take moral authority and responsibility for his actions. “Most Fortune 500 companies have begun operations during some crisis. There are many things to take away from the pandemic”, he confessed to himself. Crisis breeds innovation. The pandemic gave wings to his imagination, and this eventually became the turning point in his life.

The global pandemic of COVID-19 brought immense hardships to human lives and disrupted the day-to-day lives of the entire humanity. He noticed one such challenge that nearly everyone had been facing in their households which was how to sterilise vegetables, groceries and shipment-parcels that we purchase from outside into our homes? Different challenges faced during the pandemic ignited Aditya’s desire to do something about them. As a design-thinking student and mom’s mantra of Gandhian values of “Be the change you wish to see in the world”, he finally decided to get into action. He observed that the household warriors had been experimenting with various methods to sterilise the vegetables and groceries, like exposing them to sunlight and washing them with soap, baking soda, potassium permanganate or sanitisers. However, these methods were not entirely hygienic and had their drawbacks. They were very tedious and time-consuming, and there was a lot of waste of water and the use of chemicals had a great toll on the hands of the user. Surface transmission was a major cause of the spread of the virus.

“How can I trust whoever touched my groceries?”, his mother was visibly paranoid. As any mother would be worried for the family’s health, his mother struggled during these challenging times, trying to sanitise materials delivered or purchased from outside. She would always be anxious about whether the object was contaminated (fomites). Like any other design thinker would approach an issue, he started observing how she would put things out in the sun to sterilise the objects. Aditya asked her, “why did you put things on the roof?” She replied, “It is a family practice across generations. This is the way things can be sanitised because the ultraviolet light from the sun heats the things and kills all viruses or bacteria.”

“But Mumma, my special herb-induced butter melted in the sun!” said Aditya. He was extremely curious. He had to save his butter from melting. He must do something to protect many other things from getting damaged. How could he help all the mothers and the vendors who faced the brunt of damaged products? He put on his thinking cap. He started looking at the whole problem, not just the minutest observations. Reading through research papers and books, he realised that using ultraviolet-C (UVC) light in a controlled or enclosed environment would replicate the effect of sun rays without causing any loss to products such as butter, penetrating and spoiling certain foods or damaging delicate products. His observations via research helped him transform his innovative ideas into tangible products (refer to [Exhibits 4](#) and [6](#), and [Figure E5](#) of Graphic Novel).

Suraksha Box: a Pandora's box of dilemmas

"We should all learn to fail fast but rise sharp and correct our mistakes using paradigms", was Aditya's life mantra. Amazon used this thought process in creating its products and services. He remembered a quote from Steve Jobs' speech delivered in Seattle – "simplicity is the greatest form of sophistication." And voila! He was ready to provide the much-needed Suraksha (meaning protection in Hindi). The Suraksha Box was born! It was a UVC sterilisation box that sterilised everyday items without using chemicals and protected people from all kinds of viruses, bacteria and fungi, including all strains of COVID-19. The box went on to receive a Government of India (GOI)-Medical Council of India (MCI) patent published and was approved, recommended and certified by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute [CSIR-CMERI is an Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) approved laboratory of the GOI].

Aditya wanted to register a company now. But this teen was not eighteen yet! "This law must change!" – he mused while celebrating the success of becoming a co-founder of his own company, Nextgen Innovation. Aditya tried to convince the government officials who chided the little child for his kiddish indignance. Under normal circumstances, fetching raw materials would have been a piece of cake, but a lockdown meant that one would have to get his creative juices flowing and become a frugal innovator. Remember, it was all in the household. This "do-it-yourself" (DIY) kid found it all at home. Since India was in lockdown, and he was unable to get the materials required to execute his idea, he decided to use materials already at home such as aluminium foil from the kitchen, unused cardboard boxes, underused stationery and just anything he could get his hands on. He had to think hard about the household items that used UVC light. "I knew I had to rip off a UVC tube from the reverse osmosis (RO) water filter on the terrace", Aditya said with a spring in his feet to his classmate. "What have you done to the RO water filter?", was the reaction he expected from his parents because, in such scenarios, he and his friends would get spanked for dismantling rather than ruining a perfectly working device. Instead, his parents supported him in experimenting and creating a prototype using household items. As a result, he adopted the Gandhian way of frugal innovation and adapted his solution to become an extremely cost-effective and easy-to-make product for the DIY generation. Thus began his entrepreneurial journey. "Just watch out. These are no ordinary baby steps!" The corridor whispers had changed after seeing Aditya on TV." The Pachpande's son had made it on TV. "A celebrity kid!" (refer to [Exhibits 2 and 3](#)).

The curveballs: facing the harsh realities of the real world

The unforgettable year 2020 was when people mostly reacted out of panic and not with reason. The challenges everyone faced were beyond anything political or even environmental. Now more than ever, the world needed to prepare the future generation to think differently and creatively to assess problems and suggest solutions. A global pandemic brought on by a contagious virus would not discriminate; it would affect people from every walk of life because of surface transmission. For problems such as these, people needed to bring forth methodologies and systems adopting social innovation early on for the young children to understand. The harsh realities of this world struck Aditya harder than he had anticipated. Using the principle of social innovation, the success of a product like the Suraksha Box was dependent on the collaborative efforts of all the stakeholders, such as government departments, the corporate world and non-profit organisations. The Suraksha Box needed a patent for it to get accepted as a sterilisation product, which depended on government agencies and bureaucracy, which acted as a hindrance in making his dream a reality. Eventually, Aditya and his father co-founded NextGenInnov8 Global Solutions Private Limited, making him a super young entrepreneur (refer to [Exhibit 1](#)).

This episode stirred up another thought-storm in him – “Why is age still a criterion to be an innovator?” “Why cannot I own a company that I created? Just because I am a minor?” Aditya, disgruntled, stared at his father in askance. This determined and focused change-maker was not going to jeopardise the future of his age group. “Small impediments, son, never hinder dreams!” Father immediately cajoled Aditya, clicked a memory, and flashed it on his Instagram with Mahatma Gandhi’s quote, “Be the change you want to see in the world!” Aditya diligently sought feedback on his product, convinced the concerned agencies with the impact stories, and finally succeeded in getting a GOI-MCI patent published. This simple process consumed a lot of valuable time and numerous iterations. However, the first big step in the journey of Suraksha Box was a reality. Baby steps! “Huh! Too big for his boots” – he still heard the grumbles and mumbles!

He already had a patent-published product!! Top scientists from the ICMR, the National Institute of Virology and the CSIR gave encouraging feedback on the innovation, commending its practical, natural and scalable nature. The patent helped Aditya scale his innovation and make it sustainable in the long run. He was fortunate enough to listen to the speech by Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the 100 Years of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India conference about his dream to make India a US\$5tn economy. That was where he got inspired by “Atmanirbhar Bharat” (a clarion call for a self-reliant India) and decided to make the Suraksha Box a “Made in India” product. He felt that the government was heading in the right direction because, with Intellectual Property Right, young entrepreneurs could make India exceed US\$5tn and increase India’s Innovation Index.

Fuelling a dream

This happened to be just the tip of the iceberg. Many people, including his dad, asked him when he received the patent, “How are you planning to commercialise this product?” He immediately replied, “No, this is the time to help others and impact lives. This Suraksha Box is 1/5th the cost of anything else on the market. I aspire to make a difference by positively impacting the lives of people who faced massive difficulties during the midst of the pandemic.” That was why he decided to start a philanthropic venture called “NextGeninnov8 Social Foundation.” On the launch, Aditya explained – “seeing a problem that society was facing, coming up with a solution to solve that problem, and making lives better is the crux of social innovation. It was imperative for me to consider social innovation because it encouraged us to step up from narrow thinking ways of engagement to more divergent ways of thinking and solving problems of the community for others, interconnecting various factors to truly impact others, which was essential for the further development of innovation.”

The millennials cared more about impact and sustainability, as they were very aware of and even concerned about them. Entrepreneurship played a crucial role. It encouraged others to be different and think critically to inspire others to change the world. Aditya decided to make a DIY kit version of the Suraksha Box. It increased the adoption rate of his product, as now thousands of students in various schools had assembled it as a DIY practical social innovation science project. Concerning environmental considerations, it also helped reduce climate change because it saved many resources like water and other chemicals. Hence, this came under the climate action project. It helped save about 50,000 L of water and 48 L of sanitiser per year, and the numbers just got better in an industrial atmosphere. “Sustainability should always be considered during any process of creation of any modern product.” These words echoed in Aditya’s ears. To create the impact that he had envisioned, he needed funds. However, the pandemic gripped most companies and governments with their severe problems. Now was when he had to decide between options such as choosing seed and angel funding, borrowing a loan or even trying to get a grant from the government. None of these options appealed to Aditya.

Very soon, the father-son duo stumbled upon the idea of crowd-funding. How this new and innovative method of crowd-funding would fuel Aditya's dream was the big question. Crowd-funding was one of the life skills needed to receive funds for any idea or start-up and was a big part of any entrepreneurial journey. Quick to respond to the opportunity to connect to the globe virtually during a pandemic, the father-son duo promptly created a masterclass on crowdfunding and social innovation. It was taught by Aditya, Ranganath (founder of the Fueladream crowdfunding platform), and his mentors Giri Bala Subramaniam, Manoj Anchan, Ramakrishnan Ramachandran and Sandeep (his father). The objective of this course was to teach the life skill of crowd-funding to over 1,500 students in over 135 schools, raise funds and eventually create awareness. They managed to collect approximately US\$50,000 through the "Fueladream" platform. They offered a one-month live project in the masterclasses that he conducted, and rather than charging anything for it, he had 7 to 12-year-olds across India raise about US\$50,000, thus making them COVID warriors with 2,000+ Suraksha Boxes donated to the underprivileged, needy, frontline workers, government schools, COVID-19 centres, Kirana stores and vegetable vendors. Thus, Aditya's initiative impacted more than 10,500 lives during the challenging times of the pandemic.

Laurels for Aditya

To make sure that his message reached more people and created a big impact, they decided to turn this movement into a World Record Attempt (which they achieved on 2 October 2021, on Mahatma Gandhi's birthday – a reminder of simplicity and frugality) so that more people joined the movement in support of this good cause, which got successfully achieved by assembling around 1,500 kits (refer to [Exhibit 5](#)).

As a crusader for the movement for this World Record attempt, a crucial skill that Aditya had to demonstrate was leadership. However, one could not inculcate leadership through formal training during childhood, but it developed over time with experience. Being a part of such a noble cause, he could hone his leadership skills by being involved with everyone and playing an active role in strengthening the social movement. He was leading by example as he shone brightly and showed others the way to actuate their dreams. "Creativity requires courage", he said, inspiring all. Citations that were read from podiums spoke volumes about his persistence and determination. Speaking from one such stage Aditya inspired the young minds with the words – "I decided to go the frugal route because it would encourage more and more people to make the DIY boxes to protect their families, thus helping fulfil or support the vision."

At one of the award ceremonies, his school teacher read a citation proudly – "Aditya is very motivated, caring and active participant in our online and offline discussions. He is a leader while being a great team player and constantly seeks to support his peers. In spite of being involved in so many extra-curricular activities, he has been a brilliant student and is amongst the top 1% of students I have ever taught. He is talented, caring, intuitive, dedicated, and focused on his pursuits. He has already done 15 credits worth summer college at Stanford and summer courses at Harvard, Babson and Oxford which helps him to get along with a diverse range of international students. He is keynote speaker at various top international conferences and events reserved for corporate leaders. We at Indus International School, Pune are absolutely delighted with Aditya's several achievements" (refer to [Exhibits 1](#) and [6](#) and [Figure E6](#) of Graphic Novel).

Aditya's first step in a long, fruitful journey was enriching. He went from getting teased as a "lecture man" to becoming a keynote speaker at various events and conferences at IIT Delhi, IIMs, the Global Business Summit, the International Youth Leadership & Innovation Forum and many others. He started getting invited to coveted events. He had pledged to support the needy and underprivileged citizens of the country with his latest innovation, the Suraksha Box, commemorating the 151st birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. The school principal

and a few dignitaries from the education sector and governance during tea were heard talking – “Surely the future is of whole-brained learners and entrepreneurs like Aditya. We together must pledge to transform our education system to nurture whole brain leaders and adopt the Whole Brain Teaching and Learning Framework adopted globally.”

Standing on a precipice

Aditya had become a force to reckon with. The world was watching him now. What would be his next move? Nurture child leaders? Philanthropy? Edupreneurship? Innovator? Businessman? The stage was all set! Spotlight on Aditya! Would he bask in the limelight or showcase more child talent and give them the spotlight? For the eagle-eyed Aditya, tough challenges opened doors to new possibilities. Gaping at the horizon, he stood tall, all agog to move mountains. He was not the one to ever compromise on ethics, values or purpose, but today he found himself at a crossroads. Should he choose social change over commercialisation of his business, simplicity and minimalism over product perfection, crowdfunding over loans or angel investors or manufacture in China or make in India? Endless dilemmas to steer out of.

For Aditya’s parents, the challenges were real – balancing his academic responsibilities with his entrepreneurial activities, managing social expectations and ensuring he still had a childhood to enjoy. Sandeep was confident that Aditya was no ordinary kid, and if he got the right ecosystem, he would surely emerge as a global face of child leadership. Would our educational institutions not benefit from Aditya’s inspirational story and nurture more child leaders, change-makers and innovators? The unstoppable Aditya, aspiring for acceptance, dreamt that someday, these policymakers and businesses would acknowledge child innovators and not write them off just because they were adolescents. Aditya, standing on a precipice, dreamt along (refer to [Exhibit 6](#) and [Figure E7](#) of Graphic Novel).

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Exhibit 1. About Aditya Pachpande

Aditya's child leadership life cycle is currently in the stage of active mentorship and program development. He is deeply involved in mentoring young leaders and developing programs aimed at nurturing leadership skills among children.

Additionally, Aditya is engaged in talent identification initiatives and community outreach efforts to identify and support emerging leaders within schools and communities. Through his ongoing efforts, Aditya is ensuring that the next generation of leaders receives the guidance, support, and opportunities they need to flourish in their leadership roles.

Aditya Co-founded Nexgeninnov8 Social Foundation in 2020, a charitable division of NextGenInnov8 Global Solutions, focusing on social work. Aditya has been actively involved in various social activities aimed at making a positive impact on society. Nexgeninnov8 Social Foundation has made significant contributions to societal advancement through various initiatives aimed at promoting innovative solutions.

Table E1 Vision, mission and future plans

Aditya's vision	To be the leading provider of innovative training programs, courses and cutting-edge tools/platforms that empower individuals with 21st-century skills, fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship and enabling them to thrive in the rapidly evolving global landscape
Aditya's mission	Equip individuals with essential 21st-century skills for success in a technology-driven world. Foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Empower individuals to create disruptive solutions and seize entrepreneurial opportunities
Short-term action plan (2024)	1. Expand the reach of his Suraksha Box by partnering with schools across the country to integrate it into their science and innovation curricula 2. Continue creating awareness of child leadership by organising workshops and interactive webinars, and targeted social media campaigns to share success stories from young innovators, thus building a supportive community that encourages experimentation and sharing of ideas among young leaders
Long-term action plan (2024–2030)	1. Establishing a sustainable innovation hub that supports young entrepreneurs globally. His vision includes the creation of a collaborative platform where young innovators can access resources, mentorship and funding to bring their ideas to life 2. To collaborate with international educational institutions and technology companies to provide these resources 3. To advocate for policy changes that recognise and nurture child leadership, emphasising the importance of practical, innovation-driven education 4. To foster an ecosystem that not only celebrates young leadership but also integrates it into the broader dialogue on global challenges and solutions, ensuring that the voices of the next generation are not just heard but are instrumental in shaping the future

Sources: Created by authors; Reference: www.adityapachpande.com

Exhibit 2. Dilemmas emerging out of Aditya's journey

Table E2

<i>S. no.</i>	<i>Choice A</i>	<i>Choice B</i>
<i>Business related</i>		
1	Make it a social non-profit venture	Make it a for-profit commercial product
2	Value-based vision (the Gandhian way)-people-centric approach	Profit-based vision (ROI-centric approach)
3	Value driver	Concept driver
<i>Leadership related</i>		
4	Create leaders	Create followers
5	Engagement-community based	Engagement-media based
6	Inter-generational equity	Intra-generational branding
7	Win minds (competition)	Win hearts (compassion)
<i>Education related</i>		
8	Success: high grades for children	Success: high 21 st -century skills
9	Curriculum: teacher-centric at the school level	Curriculum: student-centric at the school level
10	Child leadership: inductive learning	Child leadership: deductive learning
<i>Entrepreneurship related</i>		
11	Child innovators – systemic	Child innovators – intrinsic
12	Age criterion	Age is a mere number
13	Entrepreneurs' skills can be formally honed (institution) internally	Entrepreneurs' skills can be informally honed (market) externally

Note: ROI = return on investments

Source: Created by authors

Exhibit 3. Dilemmas: Suraksha Box ultraviolet-C

Table E3

<i>S. no.</i>	<i>Choice A</i>	<i>Choice B</i>
1	Cost-focused: manufacture a simple, low-cost, functional for masses affordable even to low-income groups (utility: product cover art)	Differentiation: Make a very durable, top end, with atomic sensors and on/off timers, with a good finish and aesthetic (decoration: art over product)
2	The consumer receives the product as a do-it-yourself kit	The consumer receives ready to use product via a contract manufacturer 3 rd party logistics (3PL)
3	As a social non-profit venture	As a profit commercial product venture
5	In house manufacturing	Outsource manufacturing
6	Raise funds by crowdfunding using portals	Self-financing
7	National operation and marketing only	Global operation and marketing
8	Strategic procurement cost as a factor	Self-reliant through local suppliers
9	Make it open source and share will all to assemble themselves from available material	Enforce patents and restrict
10	Achievement: go for the world record to get more participation and reach	Confine to as and when the required concept
11	Execute diversified and integrative growth strategy	Execute intensive as a growth strategy
12	Social wellness maximisation	Wealth maximisation
13	Innovation focused	Maintain status quo
14	Business to consumer (B2C)	Business to business (B2B)
15	Regional/national	Global (especially USA market)
16	Promotion: focus on promotion mix components	Promotion: focus on opinion leaders, reference groups, celebrities, personalised, etc

Source: Created by authors

Exhibit 4. Differentiation between child leadership and adult leadership

Table E4

<i>Bases</i>	<i>Child-led leadership</i>	<i>Adult-led leadership</i>
Learning approach	Pedagogy oriented	Andragogy oriented
Plan of action	"Just do it" concept	The ability to know before doing
Concept of self	Impulsive – the target is to accomplish the task irrespective of progression or growth	Meditated – progression and growth perspective
Intent	Process-oriented	Outcome-oriented
Elements	Dream, visualisation is an element that exists and may contribute to decision-making	Experience is an element that exists and may contribute to decision-making
Outlook	The task is usually curiosity-based followed by passion-driven	The task is usually purpose-driven
Attitude	Firefighting	Gains
Outcome	Fearless of outcomes	Fear of failure is high
Degree of power	Mental (courageous and powerful mindset)	Both physical and mental are usually applied
Nature	Isomorphic	Ethnocentric
Phenomena	Divergent	Convergent
Style of leadership	Child leadership style is more situational based on leadership	Adult leadership style is authoritative, participative or servant.
Feedback	Regular timely and ongoing feedback is required	Usually on completion of a task or assignment.
Degree of risk factor	Enter the project, with the least thoughts on the intensity of the risk	Enter project, with calculated and anticipated risk

Source: Created by authors

Exhibit 5. Growth analysis of NextGenInnov8 [quantitative]

In 2023, NextGenInnov8 experienced remarkable growth, with a year-over-year revenue increase of 133%, and committed to double its revenue this year too. This growth trajectory had been fuelled by strategic partnerships, expanded offerings, new tech products in quizzing and a growing customer base. As a result, the estimated valuation of NextGenInnov8 currently stands at approximately \$5m, reflecting the company's strong market position and potential for further expansion.

NextGenInnov8 was committed to scaling up entrepreneurship pursuits, particularly through mentoring and training courses tailored for children. Recognising the importance of instilling entrepreneurial skills from a young age, the company has developed comprehensive programs designed to foster creativity, critical thinking and business acumen in young minds. These courses cover various aspects of entrepreneurship, including idea generation, business planning and marketing strategies, empowering children to unleash their entrepreneurial potential. With a focus on hands-on learning and practical experience, NextGenInnov8 aimed to nurture the next generation of innovators and leaders, driving forward the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Over the past two years, NextGenInnov8 had demonstrated impressive revenue growth, increasing from US\$110,000 to US\$251,000. Building on this momentum, the company is projecting further growth, with a target revenue of US\$500,000 for the current fiscal year. This substantial growth trajectory reflects NextGenInnov8's strong market position, strategic initiatives and commitment to driving forward innovation and entrepreneurship globally. This growth trajectory has been fuelled by strategic partnerships, expanded offerings, new tech products in quizzing and a growing customer base. As a result, the estimated valuation of NextGenInnov8 currently stands at approximately \$5m, reflecting the company's strong market position and potential for further expansion.

Table E5

S. no.	Activities	Quantitative impacts
1	Suraksha Box initiative	The initiative brought together 1,500 participants globally, partnering with 150 schools and 20 corporates. The aim was to protect against infectious diseases through the Suraksha Box, impacting lives across various sectors
2	Crowdfunding training	Training 2,000 students in crowdfunding raised US\$36,000, benefiting 15,000 underprivileged individuals through crowdfunding campaigns

Source: www.nextgeninnov8.com/

Exhibit 6

Facilitator may also use a visual case snapshot as a standalone graphic novel titled “Travails of Aditya – A Child Innovator.” It will be useful for:

- greater engagement of diverse set of learners during case-based sessions;
- the convenience of particularly hard of hearing (HOH) learners; and
- the beginning or conclusion of the case session.

Table E6 Graphic Novel summary

<i>“Travails of Aditya – A Child Innovator”</i> <i>Case Study Graphic Novel</i> <i>Figure no. Frame title</i>	
1	There can be NO child leaders?!!
2	Are you kidding me?
3	Re-Search – Age is just a number
4	Grades growth mindset versus lead growth mindset
5	Light bulb moment
6	Eye-opening moment for school
7	The crossroads

Source: This Graphic Novel has been created by author Saloni Sinha; Graphic tool: www.storyboard.com; Reference: www.adityapachpande.com

Figure E1 “There can be NO child leaders, really!?”

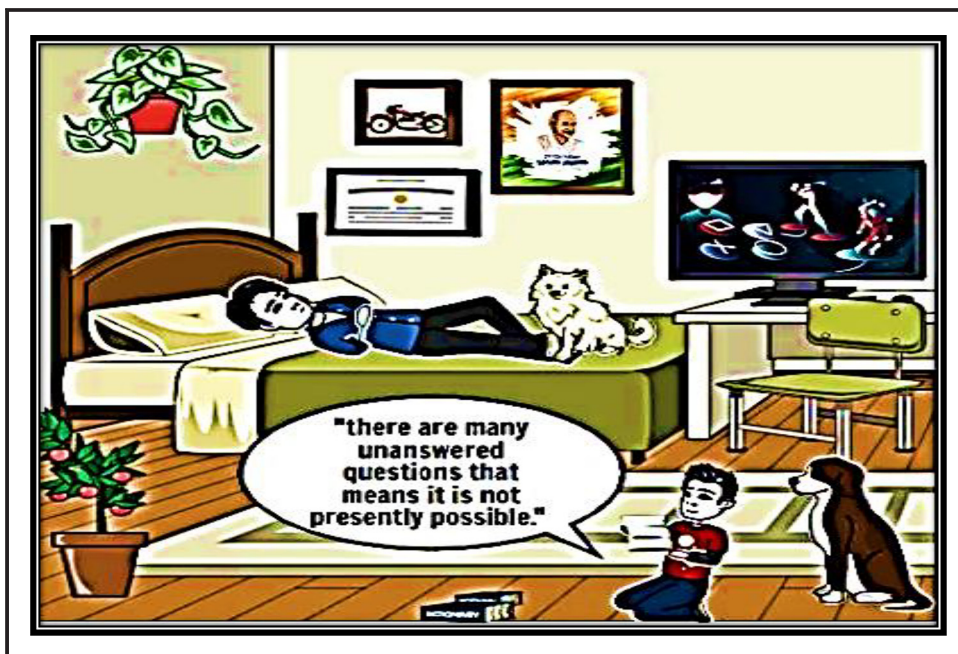


Figure E2 “Are you kidding me?”

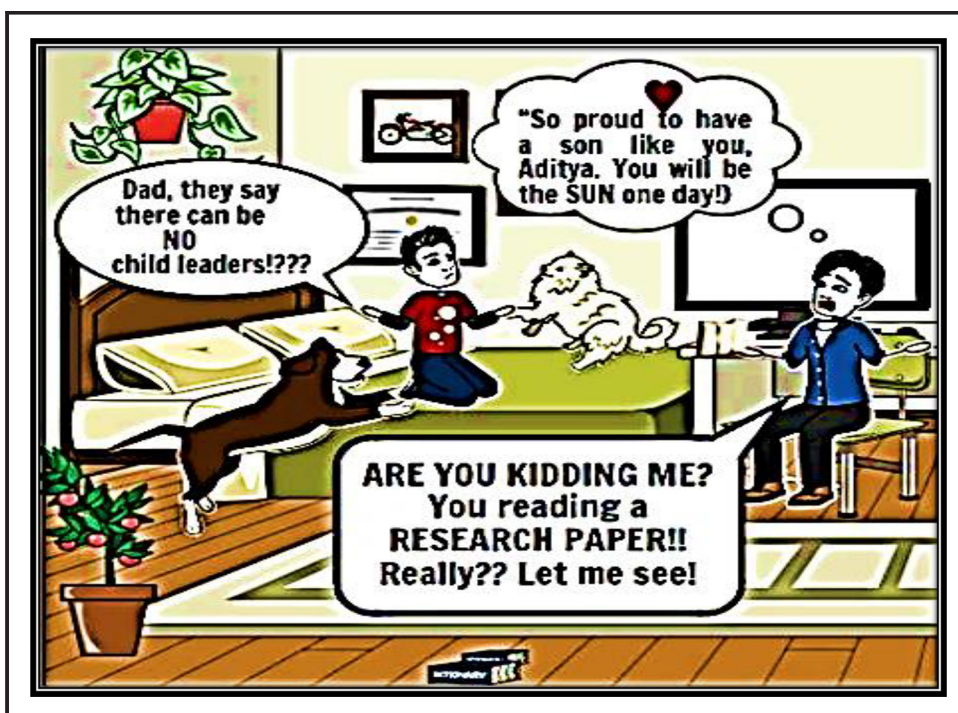


Figure E3 Re-Search – Age is just a number

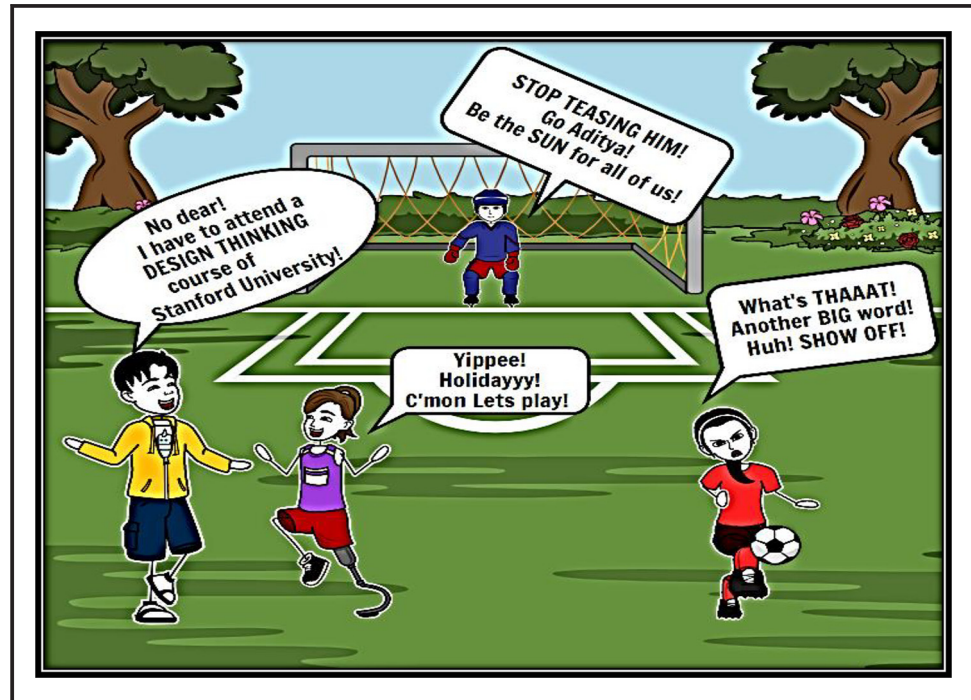


Figure E4 Grades growth mindset versus lead growth mindset

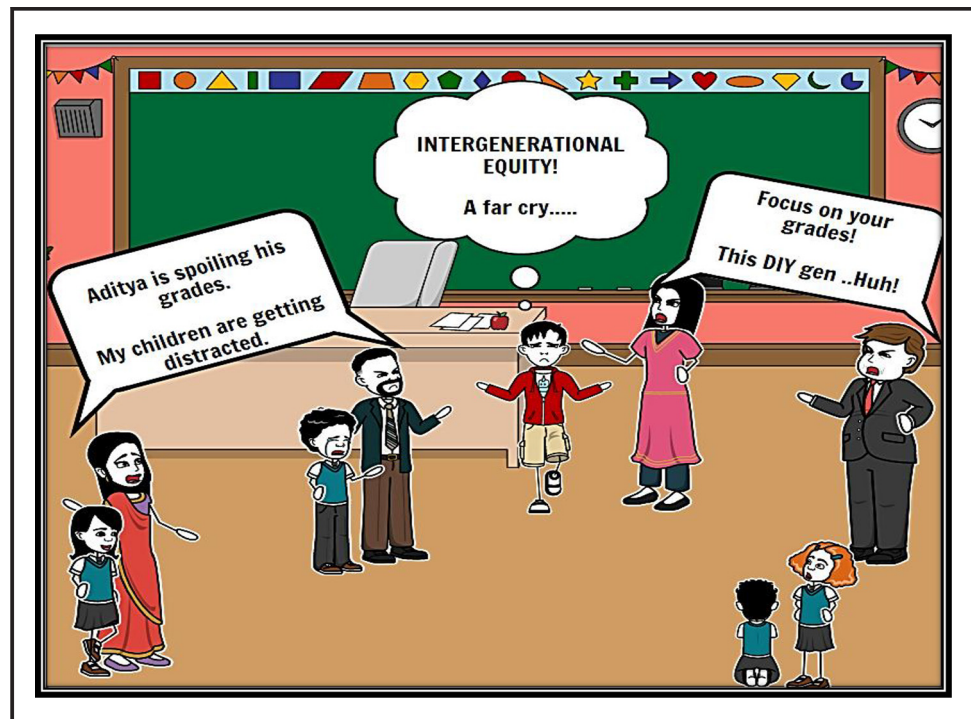


Figure E5 “Light bulb moment”



Figure E6 Eye-opening moment for school



Figure E7 The crossroads



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