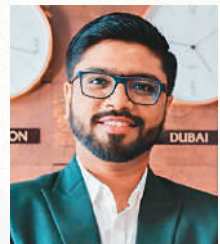
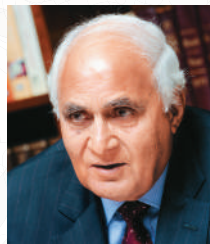


Outlook

initiative



INDIA **75** @ CHANGE MAKERS
OF MODERN INDIA





CHOCKO VALLIAPPA

CEO of Vee Technologies, is Vice Chairman of Sona Group of Institutions

EDUCATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP SPUR INDEPENDENT INDIA'S SUCCESS

By Chocko Valliappa*

As India celebrates the 75th anniversary of its independence it is a moment of great pride for Indians like me who were born in a free nation. The way India has expanded and evolved its education system is perhaps its single biggest achievement. By expanding its education network to 1.5 million schools, 45,000 colleges, 1000 universities and catapulting its gross enrolment ratio to over 27% India has strongly established its supremacy in the global knowledge economy.

India has pulled up its literacy levels above 77% with the whole hearted contribution of private philanthropists, corporations and religious organizations.

I am privileged to serve on the board of Sona Group of education institutions started by my great grandfather Sri Kalaithanthai Karumuttu Thiagarajan Chettiar. Today my eyes light up when I see promising young girls and boys from Salem outshine equally bright Indians in academics, careers and of late, entrepreneurship. A big credit for this goes to the computer revolution of mid 1980s that gave birth to an entirely new and exciting world of computers. The Indian education system raised the demands of preparing computer professionals, IT geeks and nerds.

The concerted efforts by several entrepreneurship bodies like the TiE, NASSCOM, angel networks, the incubation cells of IITs in the last 15 years have helped spawn thousands of startups in the country. India today boasts of over 100 of them with a market capitalization of \$1billion.

We at Sona Institutions – Sona College of Technology and Thiagarajar Polytechnic College, both in Salem, have continuously provided abundant research facilities to our faculty and students at nearly 50 R&D laboratories that maintain an active two-way relationship with the industry in trying to solve real-life industry problems. The faculty has so far got over 125 patents to its credit, with many more in the pipeline. Our faculty and students in research labs are innovating to create products and solutions that can benefit the less advantaged as well as solve various problems facing the industry, agriculture and environment.

Besides encouraging students to participate in the hackathons, technical competitions, the Sona Incubation Foundation helps in incubating student startups through its association with the IIT Madras Incubation Cell (IITM-IC). Already our students have come up with several innovations that have proven to be beneficial to the industry. For instance, over the past 7 years ISROs space missions have used key components from Sona College which included two vital components like rocket motors to power the thruster, navigation camera, gyroscopes, etc.

A virtual game by a Thiagarajar Polytechnic Student team, led by Athik Mohammed, allows users to view historic monuments while cycling indoors, won accolades from Prime Minister Narendra Modi during live demonstration at the grand finale of the digital 'Toycathon 2021' organized by AICTE and key ministries.

An e-bike made from scrap materials, an automated trolley for picking products at shopping malls, an Internet of Things (IoT)-based smart farming device and a VR game, among other innovations, helped Thiagarajar Polytechnic College emerge as the winner in the CII-Department of Science & Technology instituted 'Industrial Innovation Awards 2021', the only polytechnic in the country to have won this coveted award.

Our polytechnic students have also developed 'Crop Guidance and Farmers Friend', a smart-farming app using IoT technology. Other innovations include a 'Low-Cost Corn Separator, a 'Smart Fertilizer Dispenser' and an 'E-Bus Pass'.

Seeing these young Indian kids working on cutting edge technologies and successfully addressing our national problems assure me that our nation is on the right path towards a greater brighter future.

***Chocko Valliappa, CEO of Vee Technologies, is Vice Chairman of Sona Group of Institutions**