

**K** NOWN for creating a strong human resource management system at telecom giant Vodafone, **Ashok Ramchandran**, the group executive president, group HR continued to show his people management skills at Aditya Birla Group. He believe that companies must give youngsters plethora of opportunities, like his past employers offered to him. In a conversation with BW People's **Himani Chandna**, Ramchandran says he has been lucky with the assignments that have challenged him at various stages of his career. Edited Excerpts:

## “EMPLOYER IS THE COLOUR THAT STAYS WITH YOU”

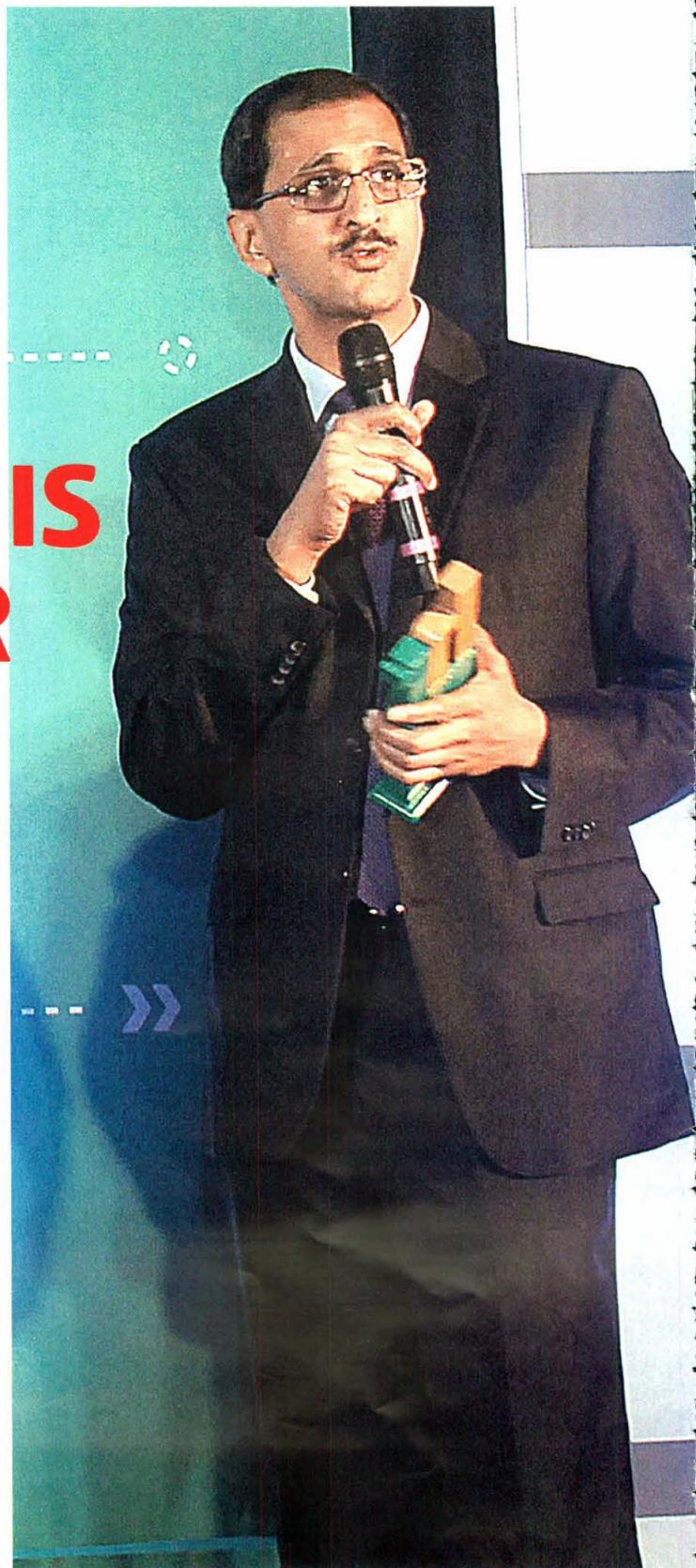
After working in both home grown -- Asian Paints and Aditya Birla, in a JV (Tata AIG General and Life Insurance) and in international firms (Vodafone and GE), how would you differentiate the working experiences, takeaways and challenges?

Actually, all these companies have had great people at the helm, leaders from whom you learn a lot, and environments in which you can contribute and impact. At these companies, youngsters are asked to jump into different and challenging roles early, and learn fast. This moulds minds and capabilities quickly. Of course,

the nature of the industry shapes the delivery tone, with however, amazing consistency of expectations from people and times.

The opportunity to make an impact has always excited me, and in an evolution sense, I have been lucky with assignments that have challenged me at various stages, and through different contexts.

I do believe that the stretch that the organization trusts you with, determines your learning and contributing levels, and is a fitting match with



# INTERVIEW

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**Purpose and vision for oneself are critical**

one's own passion and need to make a difference. This needs to go in tandem. I am indeed proud to have been and to be, a part of some interesting journeys, and to have the opportunity to work with some awesome teams. The company you choose, is the colour that stays with you, even over time.

**Artificial Intelligence, data analysis and many other things in HR tech space have evolved. How**

My sense is that senior HR people must allow younger, brighter, more contemporary colleagues to drive this transformation. In all likelihood, it will challenge the concept of seniority. But the leaders of this phase of change could well be young, emerging leaders. The seniors must sponsor actively, be open to learning and simply empower the change ahead. Holding your ego back, and opening windows of learning ... seems a good thing to do, for senior HR leaders.

**What's your role at Aditya Birla Group and which are the policies that you are proud of at the organisation?**

designed to not only support this, but push for it energetically for this. Building careers in such a diverse workforce, with openness and fairness, comes well to our Group, and people stay with us for being such a unique meritocracy. Furthermore, the opportunity for employees to contribute beyond their roles and engage in initiatives that have a deep social purposes is a big draw. Across our factories, we have transformed communities, with the active participation of our employees. They make the difference. At the core, we believe that our people create the magic that has held us in good stead across

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**it is going to change the working of human resource departments?**

HR tech is fast evolving ... the moment you think of your employee as a customer, you will see the wide opportunity to harness data, analytics and technology – to create signature experiences. The adoption has to be more open ended, and the design evolving. The new age is upon us already. Everyone – existing and potential talent assume that you will get on top of this journey.

Aditya Birla Group brings together the richness of our heritage and a highly successful track record, with the contemporariness of modern practices, across a range of sectors in manufacturing and services. This spread is our strength as well, and our values and culture the binding glue. Bringing this world of opportunities alive for our employees, is the real opportunity for our leaders, and our policies and practices are

time, sailing high on good waters, and through tough times too. An eclectic blend of respect and contemporariness.

**What are the talent challenges in the industries you operate, especially when you have to deal with a multigenerational workforce?**

The ability to keep teams energised and excited is the key to success. The concept of purpose is core to our employees, including the younger people



Ashok Ramchandran receiving award for "the CHRO of the year" at BW HR Excellence Awards

joining us, laterally or from the different campuses, across functional streams. Aligning your contribution to your core energies and the opportunity to make a difference, rather than seeing it merely as a role / job ... releases discretionary effort, and is the differentiator that has kept our Group thriving.

Building deep business acumen has been a successful focus, as is now our agenda on grooming a global mindset. We operate successfully across sectors, and our practices allow for an appropriate mix of strong business / local empowerment, with singularity of vision, values and leverage of scale and core practices.

Also, balancing the respect for experience and the energy for youth, gives us the mutual connect to allow our teams to impact seamlessly, challenge each other and yet, learn together too, in moving mountains. We are proud of this, and celebrate it. These are not contras, but complimenting each other in the evolution of impact.

**How Aditya Birla Group is focusing on training programs and re-skilling?**

Learning and talent is at our core. Our business and functional leaders are our prime movers of the agenda here, and across levels, there is deep belief in grooming and building

excellence, in functions as well as in individuals. A holistic approach of exciting roles at the core – nothing can substitute that -- backed up by strong on boarding and training processes allows for speedy journey to impact.

Our talent processes are very comprehensive, and multi-tiered. They bring to the fore conversations that count. We have processes at every level - factory/zonal, business, functional and at the Group as well. Processes apart, the involvement in the development of people, is personal for our leaders. And we are proud of that. Our senior business and HR leaders, as well as our chairman are

intrinsically involved in reviewing and sponsoring the development of talent.

**Which are the qualities a person must build to become successful, irrespective of the industry he/she operates in?**

Even at an individual level, purpose and vision for oneself are critical. Passion for impact, with the willingness to work across roles, boundaries and challenges moulds character. Building an attitude of fairness and collaboration, confidence to challenge and learn too, and the ability to put the need to deliver ahead of one's own expectations .... Some qualities I have seen in successful leaders and teams too! ■