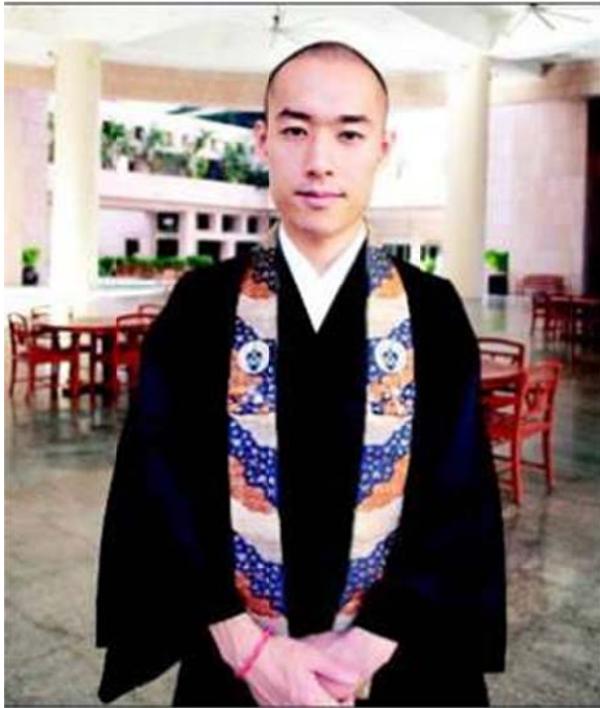


Monk who is sold on ISB: Japanese creating management model to attract Gen Y to Buddhist temple



January 03, 2012: *Keisuke Matsumoto* is creating a management model to help Buddhist temples in Japan attract Gen Y based on his learnings from the Hyderabad B-school, reports Kala Vijayraghavan

A year ago, a 32-year-old Buddhist monk completed a post-graduate programme from the [Indian School of Business \(ISB\)](#), Hyderabad, the B-school that's known to have everyone from dancers to scuba divers as students. Keisuke Matsumoto from the Komyoji temple in Japan is now busy putting to practice his learnings by creating a new management model for modern Buddhist temples in Japan. His focus is to attract more members of the millennial generation to these places of worship.

Matsumoto is working on updating Buddhist temples to meet the modern needs of people without disturbing their religious traditions.

He is also recommending the MBA programme of [ISB](#) to other monks so that they can pick up basic lessons in management that can help in running temples and coping with issues better through analytical and strategic thinking.

Komyoji is an old temple - one version has it that it may have been built as long back as in 1240 -- located in the centre of Tokyo and belongs to Jodo-Shinshu Hongwanjiha, one of the most popular traditional Buddhist schools in Japan. The temple location has several corporate offices and Matsumoto is keen to innovate to attract youngsters working in the area.

"As a Buddhist monk, being an MBA graduate doesn't make any difference to my position or rank in the temple. But it makes a difference to the quality of my work," says Matsumoto. "While [Buddhism](#) is my life, I am not satisfied with its current situation. To promote Buddhism among modern people, we have to make it more relevant," he adds.

One way to do that is via management studies. For instance, Matsumoto points out that he is now applying management guru Michael Porter's Five Forces Analysis - a framework to determine the attractiveness of a market - to develop strategies to manage temples.

Matsumoto has also launched the [Young Buddhist Association](#) with the help of college friends and has hosted a music concert in the premises of the temple.

Before embarking on his MBA, Matsumoto had opened a cafe-like open space in the temple where visitors - who have made appointments in advance - can relax with a beverage and snacks. "I don't ask visitors to donate money. It completely depends on the visitor's will. The objective of the temple cafe is not for business or to make money. It is a communication centre between temple and visitors," explains Matsumoto.

Since returning to the temple with an MBA in tow, Matsumoto has re-jigged the temple cafe. Initially, it was conceived as a place for relaxation and comfort as well as an opportunity to throw in some teachings about Buddhism to visitors. "But after ISB, I have noticed that the project also has another important role from the marketing perspective.

At the temple cafe, I can get extremely useful information from visitors about how people see Buddhism, what kind of activities are expected in the temple, and how we can improve our service," says the monk. "So I redefined the temple cafe from just a service delivery place into a centre for communication between temple and people," he adds.

Matsumoto has done a joint research on "Buddhism and economy" and personal research on "performance measurement in modern Buddhist temples." According to him, Buddhist monks in Japan are expected to double up as good managers as well as a religious leader, and there is a critical shortage of monks who have good management skills. Matsumoto is now sharing his learnings at ISB about effective ways of management with other monks.

He is also applying lessons of pricing strategies picked up at ISB since a typical temple has a unique pricing structure of 'pay as you wish.' Matsumoto remembers his 30-minute interview at ISB where he was asked about his career, initiatives in the temple and thoughts on Buddhism. He chose ISB as it offers an intensive and accelerated one-year programme focused on leadership and entrepreneurship.

"I was attracted to ISB's learning environment and its location has a special importance for me. I liked Hyderabad's multi-cultural characteristics as much as I did the calibre of ISB students," he says.

A graduate from the University of Tokyo, with honours in philosophy, Matsumoto, unlike most other students seeking well-paying corporate jobs, opted to devote himself to Japanese tradition and philosophy. His Facebook profile says he delivers management consulting customised to each temple's characteristics and explores new relationships between Buddhist priests and individuals. "Life and business coaching based on the concept of Buddhism can have a huge impact on the meaning of temples in a society". He says he chose India for management education instead of the United States because it is the land where Buddhism was born. "Also, I love India's ancient history and culture. Every year I enjoy Namaste India, the largest Indian festival in Japan."