

The book review of *What They Teach You at Harvard Business School*

Review by: Isha Gupta

There are books that you read and remember, then there are books that you read and realize they are as if someone turned the story of your life in a book. The latter is exactly what I felt after reading **What They Teach You at Harvard Business School**. The book is a witty and entertaining account by author **Philip Delves Broughton**, who leaves his lucrative job of a journalist, to go to Harvard Business School. I identified with the author, not only because I am following a path which is similar, where I left my career of three years in journalism to study MBA, but also because the book is an honest account of how an individual feels every day when they are at a B-school. Luke Johnson, the Chairman of Channel 4 television, says this book is a must read for anyone thinking of doing an MBA. You'll start identifying with the book, with the very first line, where Delves says, *'I did not go to Harvard Business School planning to write a book about the experience. In fact, after ten years as a journalist, I went there to recover from writing, to stop looking at the world around me as a source of potential stories. I wanted to learn about Business in order to gain control of my own financial fate and, more important my time.'* And by the time you finish the book, you realize even the hot shot journalists, cannot always have it right and have the reasons identified of why should you go to a B-school.

The author, beautifully narrates his first hand experiences at Harvard that you almost feel a wee bit proud yourself when he mentions how he gets accepted at Harvard, but more than that you identify

with the incidents that he mentions in the book, which now by my experience I know, are more or less similar at any Business school for that matter. Delves candidly and explicitly expresses the points he did not agree or identify with at Harvard, for instance he mentions the unease he feels, right before entering the school when he reads a student guide on what to bring. "Don't bring that guitar. Don't bring any books from literature or History classes...Don't bring your cynicism. Do bring all the diverse rest of you. We can't wait to share the experience." Just when he reads this, the awkward English cynic in him comes to life and he questions "Who were these people, and why did they talk like this? Why can't I bring my cynicism? Or my books? Aren't they the part of the 'diverse rest of me'?"

The book is not just a serious read, about his fears and insecurities but also gives you some rib tickling moments, for instance when he mentions incident of "regrettable property-damage", where a student is made to write to the entire school, confessing how he urinated against a neighbouring student's door. You enjoy every incidence he narrates when it's funny, and you also feel the intensity when he honestly shares his fears and doubts about his own future. Most of all, almost anyone studying at a B-school would identify with the feelings of the author of unease he felt in the first few months, where he felt he was competing with his peers constantly, who were a part of some mad race, where they were just running after the figures.

This would definitely make for one of those books, that leave you with few lessons and few bigger questions after you are done reading. In the last Delves says, *'One thing I had learned from studying so many entrepreneurs was that if you were going to start up a business, you better be ready*

for a lot of thankless hard work while you got it off the ground.' The statement really has depth if you read into it. Coming to a business school is not just about studying, scoring grades and getting the job, it's beyond all of that and more it's an experience of a lifetime, which is up to you what you make out of it. The book would make you think, make you question your decisions and give you an insight why striking a balance between doing something that you love and earning money doing that, is so important. The book is a must read for anyone, who loves to question things, who is open to thinking beyond numbers and designations. If not anything, read the book, for an empathizing first-hand experience of author's two years inside the cauldron of Capitalism. I can guarantee from experience, you'll enjoy the read.