

## In a first at IIM-A, visually impaired scholar earns PhD; set to join IIM Bodh Gaya faculty

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**Ahmedabad:** When Tarun Kumar Vashisth, 42, defended his doctoral thesis at IIM Ahmedabad (IIM-A) recently, he set a record of sorts. Vashisth, who is visually impaired since birth, has become the first doctor of philosophy (PhD) with disability from the premier B-school. His thesis maps the experience of visually impaired employees in corporate India.

Vashisth, who hails from Uttarakhand, is set to take up teaching at IIM Bodh Gaya later this month as an assistant professor — setting another benchmark for visually impaired faculty teaching at ‘non-disabled’ institutions.



Vashisth's thesis maps the experience of visually impaired employees in corporate India

“I was lucky to have a supportive family and environment that never made me realise that I had any deficiency — I studied at ‘normal’ school and even studied subjects

such as mathematics, which are not generally opted by visually impaired students,” recounts Vashisth. “After my BSc degree, I had cleared entrance exam in general quota for IIT Roorkee. When I was called for an interview, the administration declined admission citing that I would not be able to cope with study requirements.”

Not ready to give up, Vashisth persisted and got admission in IIM-A for the institute's doctoral program under general category in 2018. “The program started in 1971, but I became the first candidate with a disability to get admitted. It was a new experience both for me and the institute...,” says Vashisth.

The presentation-based teaching for doctoral students was tweaked for him so that he could refer to it again.

His study in human resources management (HRM) domain on the theme ‘Ableism and employment of persons with disabilities: Organizational socialization of employees with blindness’ also focused on the topic close to his heart.

Vashisth says that biggest takeaway from the findings is organizational response to a person with blindness. He adds that concept of ableism can be understood in context of all processes and systems not taking into consideration persons with disabilities.