Be a good person. The simple yet profound mantra is one that Sunanda Manoharan adopted at a very young age. The same one the Emerging Market Consultant and her husband of 20 years, Mano Manoharan, now teach their children, 14-year old daughter Divya and 9-year-old son Rishi.

Sunanda was born in Chennai, but grew up in Mumbai (formerly Bombay), the most populous city in India and the fourth most populous city in the world. She received all of her schooling and education in Mumbai before moving to Singapore.

“I moved to Singapore with my husband in the mid 1990s to work for the Bioprocessing Technology Centre which was affiliated to the National University of Singapore as a Biotechnologist,” she shares. “After living in Singapore for close to five years, we moved to the USA where I worked for a biotechnology company.”

After finishing her Masters, traveling extensively with her husband, and having both of their children, Sunanda decided it was time to birth something brand new.

In 2007, she started her own business, Innovative BioSolutions LLC, with the goal of helping companies successfully enter and profit from emerging markets, specifically India and China.

“It’s six years later and I’ve learned a lot,” notes Sunanda. “I explored different options in the early days of my business and have now been able to define a niche. Being headquartered in India has been extremely beneficial and useful.”

Primarily focused on consulting, Sunanda works with clients to formulate emerging market strategies, including market research and analysis, competitive landscape assessment, business and marketing plans, sales strategy, and profit and loss projections. She works with small and mid-size multinational life science companies to help bring their products and services to emerging markets, specifically India. “I seek out new opportunities and perform partner assessment and matchmaking for my clients now, but recognize there are many avenues still to explore,” she explains. “We see a lot of innovation happening here and the West is viewing emerging markets not just as a destination of cheap labor but where they can build solid partnerships to drive and sustain their growth story.”

With intimate knowledge and experience of the Indian life sciences market, Sunanda is a one woman effort. “I do not have employees,” she says with a smile. “I am chief cook and bottle washer!”
As if starting her own business wasn’t enough of an adventure on its own, Sunanda Manoharan also enrolled in UAlbany’s Weekend MBA Program in 2007.

UAlbany’s Weekend MBA Program was an easy choice for Sunanda. She was looking for bio-tech entrepreneurship and really needed a course of study that would allow her to concentrate on her business during the week. “A tough balancing act for certain,” she admits.

“The face-to-face interaction is just one of the benefits of a classroom setting,” expounds Sunanda. “You have to recognize that the knowledge of your professors and fellow students offers up a whole new set of experiences to which you may not otherwise be exposed.”

To professionals who may be considering pursuit of their own MBA, Sunanda dispenses some sage advice. “Many students choose to pursue an MBA soon after completing their undergrad. But for me and a lot of executives, the benefit was in first having worked on the ground to gain experience.”

“It’s important to get a basic foundation, and then your MBA” she relays. “It helps you in understanding where you want to be long-term.”

So, what will she teach her children?

“I think you need to be technically skilled in some area,” says Sunanda. “Then, when you go back to school with domain expertise, you will be equipped with a completely different set of tools. This is what I will teach my children.”

After graduating from the UAlbany Weekend MBA Program in 2009, with fellow classmate Rafael “Raf” Alvarez (profiled for Weekend MBA Stories here), the Manoharan family moved back to India.

“Our son Rishi was about five and our daughter Divya was 10 when moved back to India. It was a big change for them but they transitioned very well,” says Sunanda with a hint of pride.

Being back home has rebirthed something new once again in Sunanda Manoharan. “I learned to sing Carnatic classical music as a child,” she divulges. “Carnatic music is commonly associated with the southern part of India and now that I’m back home, I’ve reengaged by taking formal lessons.”

Indeed, the music sung from her core helps make her that good person she’s forever modeling for her children.

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