

[Vidya Shah](#) is CEO of [EdelGive Foundation](#), one of the most respected CSR arms in the country and director and former CFO of a large Indian [financial services company](#) Edelweiss as well as recipient of several awards. Much before CSR was a statutory requirement, Vidya chose to move away from an executive role at Edelweiss to birth EdelGive. Was it a questioning of material wealth - "[Yeh duniya agar mil bhi jaaye to kya hai?](#)" (What if you own the entire world too?) or a search for greater meaning, one wonders. Far from just donating money, Vidya's unique contribution being personal involvement in the various causes EdelGive supports and a shift to collaborative philanthropy. And yet, being a pre-eminent philanthropist does not stop her from asking the funding community (EdelGive included) "[Who are we to transform lives?](#)". She also believes in embracing the space of [not knowing](#), and honoring multiplicity of voices and recognizing our interdependence. Vidya is also a connoisseur of art and a student of music.



5 questions for Vidya

What Makes You Come Alive?

Undoubtedly Indian classical and other forms of music. I have a particular fondness for Pandit Jasraj, Hindi film music of the 60s and 70s and ghazals. I like the combination of great poetry and music. Over the last few months, I have begun to develop some basic understanding of Urdu through the poetry of some great stalwarts like Ghalib, Faiz, Ahmed Faraz, Mir and Sahir Ludhianvi, and their beautiful words have the power to render me into tears.

Pivotal turning point in your life?

Many, but the most significant has been meeting my husband, Rashesh. For me, he embodies a deep sense of generosity, good humour and fairness, and a desire to see everyone grow and perform to their full potential as human beings. He has been the one to bring me out of a painful shyness and instil confidence, self-belief and a sense of higher purpose and meaning.

An Act of Kindness You'll Never Forget?

There are too many to name!

One Thing On Your Bucket List?

To learn to take each day as it comes; to build a good meditation practice, stay in the present and build mental strength. To be kinder, forgive more and help as many people as I can.

One-line Message for the World?

I wait for the day when we will learn to see the basic humanity in each one of us. Perhaps that's the day we will learn to smile more, love more and forgive more. When I feel sorry for myself, I remember Carl Sagan's [A Pale Blue Dot](#). Here's an excerpt: Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.