

INTERVIEW

"One Stop Shop for High Tech Agriculture is what I have given to Indian Agriculture."

Tej Krishen Managing editor interview's :

Bhavarlal Jain *Chairman Jain Irrigation*

TK : You have been awarded the "CRAWFORD-RIED MEMORIAL AWARD" recently. While it is a matter of pride for our country, what does it mean to India.

BLJ : The Crawford Reid Award has changed the perception of world that Indian agriculture is tradition-bound and Indian agricultural practices are still primitive. World has in this award recognized that given a proper exposure to modern technology to harness the available scarce water resources for optimising Agri output, our farmers are second to none.

TK : While presenting the award, you have been complemented with bringing a 2nd GREEN revolution in India. Could you elaborate this for our readers.

BLJ : Year after year, our country faces a drought in one part and floods in another, which not only nullify's the efforts of our farmers, but also puts them to economic hardships. Between the two conditions, viz. Flood & Drought, the latter is worse. To me, therefore, the proper utilization of limited available water resources, in drought-prone or perennially water-starved regions, was of paramount importance. Very often, just for want of water in the final stage the entire crop is lost. Thus as early as in 1985, I had concluded that adoption of Drip Irrigation System will greatly save unnecessary wastage of water. Taking this as a mission I started manufacturing Micro Irrigation Systems and introduced it in India, since 1987. It did not end there only, the introduction of modern technology was multi-dimensional like introducing Green House practices and developing Tissue Cultured Seedlings. This on one side ensured adequate water Irrigation to the plants and on the other side multiplied the yield per hectare. Raising our yield to acceptable levels in the international markets and increasing the scope of export. Probably this all round development should have been the reason for the attribute "A Second Green Revolution."

TK : This award is given in recognition of significant services rendered outside US for promoting proper irrigation techniques and procedures to bring about major advancement of industry. To which single most achievement of yours can this be attributed to?

BLJ : A complete range of services from farm Equipment to survey and engineering of soil fertility and then providing a comprehensive package all under one roof and *developing the concept of One Stop Shop for High Tech Agriculture* is my major achievements.

TK : From dealership's of fertilisers, seeds, pesticides, tractors and kerosene -- Irrigation is the Jain Group's forte now. How did this transition take place?

BLJ : Agriculture has always been our core interest right through. Irrigation is an important adjunct. As we have contributed in our own way to usher in the use of PVC Pipes for Irrigation, on a large scale, the use of Micro Irrigation Systems blended well. Incorporating Liquid Fertilizers in the System added up to over all economy for the farmers' inputs. With economy of inputs on one side and increased yields on the other, our farmers begin to adopt this System as it was highly profitable. That is how it happened.

TK : Service having been your desire, why was Irrigation chosen? Can we relate it to the opportunity of buying a sick unit which was originally designed to manufacture Banana powder.

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BLJ : As I have mentioned earlier, we have been wedded to Agriculture and Irrigation is a part of it. We could serve much more by exposing newer techniques and modern equipment to our knowledgeable farmers. The result it has produced is before you to analyse.

To the other question, I should say that buying of a sick unit did not have much to do with our emphasis on irrigation except that we could inter act more intimately with the farming community for organising Papaya plantation and latex collection for each product refined papain.

TK : You have always advocated the cause of micro irrigation to be integrated in to the larger irrigation systems, how do you feel this can help a vast nation like India.

BLJ : The very vastness of our country, which is termed as a subcontinent, with diverse climatic conditions, soil, chemistry, ground water resources etc., calls for this system. As you know, our government has been seriously considering since last 25 years creation of a national water grid by inter-linking all major rivers in India which requires an astronomical investment in terms of money, manpower and equipment. Our country just cannot afford it and the implementation has become difficult. I also do not see the possibility of it happening in near foreseeable future. Till then, the flood waters have to be harnessed only by constructing dams. How do we take this water to far flung areas across thousands of kilometres of arid area without loss in seepage etc.? Micro irrigation is our immediate answer. Therefore micro irrigation systems should be considered a part and parcel of the larger irrigation systems and recognised as an infrastructure industry by world Bank and other Aid Agencies for concessional and long-term financing. That will provide a stimulus for the growth of this industry and the produce will grow by leaps and bounds. It will not be difficult to imagine the abundance of farm yields when it happens.

TK : There is also a strong opinion taking circles that micro irrigation be included in the infrastructure structure sector, so that it can be funded by World Bank and other funding and aiding agencies. What steps have, you as a pioneer, in this thought taken to achieve this.

BLJ : I have prevailed upon our consortium of bankers to take up this matter with Government of India and World Bank Authorities. I am also requesting the media like you, to voice this just opinion in the interest of increasing Agri output, which ultimately will increase world food output

TK : We have discussed a lot about what you have contributed today. Coming a little to your personal life. You have begun very modest and achieved laurels, what is the significant cause of your success.

BLJ : I have always believed in Thomas Alva Edisons often quoted words "Genius is 1% inspiration & 99 % perspiration, and my Team-mates also think and act so; the success is not mine but ours."

TK : What in your opinion, is lacking as the biggest challenge for Indian farmers - particularly the sugarcane growers?

BLJ : The biggest challenge for the Indian farmer is lack of credit support, speedy and clean delivery of credit. He

also has to adopt latest techniques for improving the Per Unit efficiency of water, land and capital. Unless he learns to adopt high technology, the faith of the farmer including the Sugar Cane growers can never be improved. Unless the farmer learns to treat his farm as his factory and looks at farming as commercial enterprises, we shall not see the required improvement.

In case of Sugar Cane growers, the over irrigation has spoiled most of their lands and as such they need to reclaim the same by use of modern techniques such as DMI, liquid water soluble fertilizers and improved varieties of planting material.

TK : Now that a new government is in power at centre and they have declared that 60 % spending will be earmarked for agriculture, what is your specific advice to government.

BLJ Doctrine :

The Government should prioritise as under :

* Complete the ongoing Irrigation Projects within the dead lines.

* Invest in soil conservation and water harvesting structures to achieve better recharging rate.

* Make Drip Irrigation - making it compulsory for cash crop farmers to use DMI for better utilization of available Well and Canal water.

* Reclaim water logged, salined and other lands rendered unproductive due to use of irrigation/excess water through DMI.

* Sell waste lands including undulated hilly, coastal terrain and help its cultivation with the help of modern technology and inputs including DMI.

+ The Drip Irrigation should be considered as a forward integration of the irrigation technology, which enjoys the infrastructure status.

+ The Government should not consider the Subsidy given to farmers as "Subsidy" but an investment for creation of infrastructure for agriculture.

+ In order to bring about a Million hectare under DMI, the Government will need to provide about Rs. 2400 Crores in the 9th Five year Plan by way of Subsidy which should be considered as an investment. *When the Government can treat the investment on Irrigation Storages as a "grant", why can not the Drip Subsidy also be considered as an Investment rather than a Subsidy?*