

*The “Bhau” I know*

# *Shri Bhavarlal Jain*



*The Man, the Mission, the Message*

*An Appreciation by Dnyan Mayur  
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## *The Man, the Mission, the Message*

### *Shri Bhavarlal Jain “Bhau”*

*“Some are born great; some achieve greatness while some have greatness thrust upon them” – William Shakespear. Shri Bhavarlal Jain, affectionately called “Bhau” by thousands of his friends, admirers and employees is a giant among contemporary Indians who have achieved greatness by their extra-ordinary hard work.*

*Bhau’s incredible rags-to-riches life story - from his very humble beginnings at Wakod in rural Khandesh to the pinnacle of industry and subsequent recognition at the highest national level in India has been amply documented. He has been filmed, photographed, interviewed, written about and honored numerous times in prestigious national and international media and business publications. That his life is a uniquely inspiring success story and that he is a modern business leader par excellence is thus very well-known. However, even at the very personal level, Bhau is a wonderful human being approaching the Vaidic ideal of “Purushottam”. Besides being an entrepreneur, he is a thinker, a writer, a philosopher, a teacher and a coach, a guide, a student ever eager to learn new things, a motivator, an innovator, a philanthropist and a community leader. And he is a loyal friend, proud father and a very loving grandfather. He immensely enjoys all of these roles and carries them out with remarkable distinction.*

*It is only by a stroke of good luck that one comes across and gets to know people like Bhau for there are so few of them. Fortunately, every few years, during my periodic visits to India, I am blessed with the opportunity through Rajabhai, to visit and spend some time with him. Even through these brief and infrequent encounters, certain aspects of his personality become immediately evident. His life is an open book of profound wisdom from which we can learn a lot. So here is the Bhau I know as an every-day human being and some of the things that impress me most about him.*

#### **Vision**

*If I were to describe Bhau by just one word, out of a million possibilities, the one that jumps up in my mind is “visionary”. Big things come out of big ideas and Bhau is a man of big dreams. As Stephen Covey says in his celebrated Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, first things first - begin with the end in mind. Bhau has an intuitive feel for where he wants to go and every thing he has done in his exemplary career of over forty years has been with a single-minded focus on his vision. He wants to begin by helping the local economy. He wants to do it scientifically through the development of industry, be it plastic pipes and sheets, irrigation systems or food processing. He wants the business to be agriculturally –based utilizing local resources in order to maximize benefits to the region. He wants to do it on a large scale and, of course, ethically. Not ambition but low aim is crime - Bhau has taken this adage to heart and put it in action. “If Tatas can do it, why can’t I? If America can do it, why can’t we do it? Right here. Bigger. Better.” This is the essence of his thought process. Bhau’s broad, long-term vision is a flourishing Khandesh, an industrial Maharashtra, a developed and globally respected India. To his*

credit, Bhau recognized before most experts that judicious water management for irrigating the over 43 million hectares of non-productive, barren land was the key to the success of the nation. Continuously expanding the area covered by drip irrigation, the so-called Second Green Revolution, is a significant part of this vision. He proudly calls himself "son of the soil" and agriculture is his true passion.

### **Work Ethic**

Bhau is a man of action with an incredible get up and go. Once his vision is set and his mind is made up, no obstacles, neither the Indian bureaucracy, nor persistent health issues can deviate his mind or energy from the pursuit of his vision. It is this work ethic and personal discipline that helped Bhau fight off the pain and anxiety of no less than four heart procedures beginning at a relatively young age. Bhau does not indulge in empty talk and meaningless political discussions, a rare talent in India. He is a practical, serious, scholarly man not given to display of emotion or celebration without achievement. He believes that work ethic defines character and character defines the man, not his worldly fame. Bhau leads a very clean, simple and principled life with no indulgences and no vices. A wonderful example of his emphasis on clean life is the fact that workers at the Jain factories get a glass of healthy milk and banana rather than tea and samosas during their snack breaks. He has a well-planned daily routine that he follows scrupulously. He works hard and expects others to do so. Work is indeed worship for him.

### **Excellence**

The first thing you notice when you see or visit anything pertaining to Bhau - any of his offices, his factories, his laboratories, his gardens or his farms - is his pursuit of excellence. Clearly, Bhau believes that if something is worth doing, then it must be done well. There is no better example of this than his residential/business complex in the enormous sprawl of his fabulous property at Mohadi which could easily be the envy of the Ambanis and Bachchans. In just a few years he has converted the dry wasteland on the outskirts of Jalgaon into a literal "Nandanvan". Everything about him is first-rate. He is an A-plus man running an A-plus operation so much so that all his children and grand children have names starting with the alphabet A. This is not an accident. It is the vision. It is the dream. It is the expectation. Surely this must put considerable pressure on the youngsters to perform in an A-plus manner. But so far, nobody has disappointed him. Bhau's pursuit of excellence is also manifest in his heroes and in the people he surrounds himself with. Jawaharlal Nehru is his political hero. J.R.D. Tata is his ideal business leader and Mahatma Gandhi his life-time ideal. There can be no better role models to follow. And among his friends are people like poet Mahanor, sculptor Sudhir Deshpande just to name a few among the ranks of artists, writers, professionals, politicians and business people all excelling in their own fields. Bhau understands the value of people and their relationships.

### **Continuous Improvement**

It seems to me that one of the most important keys to Bhau's success is his focus on continuous improvement in personal life as well as business practices. Bhau keeps up

with the developments in the advanced countries, both in technology as well as management techniques, and aggressively adopts those suitable and appropriate for his businesses. I have a distinct recollection of one of his medical visits to the US in the early eighties. Personal computers, in their really primitive form, had just started coming out. Even the most sophisticated US businesses were not using the PCs then. When Bhau heard about the Apple LISA PC during his trip, he asked his assistant to learn as much as possible about it, see how the Jain Group could use it and then go ahead and buy it. And he did. I was stunned. Needless to say, today the Jain Group has a very modern IT center fully equipped with the best equipment. Bhau is a voracious reader and has an impressive collection of books in his personal library. Innovation, on-going research, making the most of limited local resources, waste-minimization and an insatiable thirst for knowledge are the drivers of continuous improvement in Bhau's approach to life and business. Calculated risk-taking is also a part of Bhau's continuous improvement process. A wonderful example of this is his underwriting the financial guarantees for up to 5 years when he first introduced the drip irrigation system to hesitant farmers unfamiliar with the new technology.

### **Principle-centered Leadership**

Family-controlled large business houses have existed in India for decades and many of them have been very successful and profitable. However, ethical practice has never been a strong point of Indian business. The Jain Group stands in shining contrast to this unfortunate fact, thanks to Bhau's principle-centered leadership. Bhau has injected his personal values of honesty and integrity to the fullest in his businesses, a rare accomplishment in the Indian business environment. Bhau deals with people from all walks of life, in all kinds of positions in public and private sectors. His friends range from Sharad Pawar to Rajabhai Mayur to Suresh Jain representing a very wide spectrum of personalities and attributes and yet Bhau deals with them with equal ease and naturalness, never compromising his basic principles and values. Deeply founded in the Indian philosophy and culture, Bhau is immensely proud of his background, his parents and his early childhood influences. He has a clear sense of his roots, his calling and his destiny. He derives much of his strength from this clarity.

### **Philanthropy**

Bhau's philanthropic activities under the auspices of the Jain Foundation have been well described in the numerous books and articles written about him. He is now dedicating more and more of his time and resources for community leadership and charitable activities starting his efforts right in his birthplace of Wakod, to Jalgaon and beyond to other places in the region. His emphasis, as always, is on education, health care and making employment/business opportunities available to deserving people. He is a frequent speaker at formal and informal functions and his speeches are most informative, interesting and inspiring. That itself is a major community service in motivating and guiding young people. He is an activist for the farmers and is a strong supporter of low-interest loans and price-floors for their products.

### **Humility**

The personal trade-mark of this high-achiever is not a Rolls-Royce, a Rolex watch or diamond-studded gold cuff-links. The most strikingly visible characteristic of Bhau is the ever-present smile and his almost unbecoming humility. This unassuming man literally shines in his simple, clean attire, pleasant manner and friendly conversation. He is, indeed, "Bhau" to everybody in the true sense of the word.

***Walking the Talk***

Bhau is a man of few words and more action. He does not preach. He demonstrates things by doing them. He shows by personal action. He walks the talk. The true legacy of a great leader is to train and leave behind him people better than himself. Bhau has raised, trained and developed four wonderful sons - Ashok, Anil, Ajit and Atul - all highly successful business professionals in their own right. And Bhau did this not by force, not by direct demands or in anyway lecturing, controlling or constraining them. True to his philosophy, Bhau leads them by example. Bhau says "if they can see your actions and behavior, why do you need to tell them anything?" What a refreshing thought for those of us prone to giving long, deafening lectures to our innocent children. Bhau is a team player and believes that the future belongs to those who think collectively, consult and cooperate. And consistent with this approach, all major business and family decisions are taken jointly under Bhau's unobtrusive guidance.

In summary, Bhau is an enlightened businessman with a purpose. His personal mission is based on five cornerstones – gratitude for the local people, patriotism, social commitment and responsibility, promotion of agro-business and leaving a legacy for future generations and community.

Today, on his birthday, we salute Bhau with respect and admiration and wish him decades of Peace, Health and Happiness. We need his wisdom and guidance for the years to come. Jalgaon needs him. In his famous Psalm of Life, Longfellow says

***Lives of great men, all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime  
Departing leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time***

Bhau will be with us for many more years. But he has already changed the world around him for the better. He has created giant footprints on the sands of time. Bhau has been instrumental in bringing the Second Green Revolution to the farmlands of India with more than 60% and ever-increasing drip irrigation coverage. This is a landmark achievement worthy of the Ramon Magsaysay award or the Nobel Prize for Peace.

**2054 words**

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