



Industrious

Sharad Pawar through the eyes of industrialists



BHAVARLAL JAIN

Chairman,
Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd.

Entrepreneur!

How does one describe *Saheb*? Well read, contemporary farmer, farmer's godfather, astute businessman, successful politician, veteran manager, experienced organiser, a king of all he surveys, discerning literature lover, an interpersonal relationship expert; a loving gardener who tends to his family with utmost love and care; one who stoically braves all storms; an environmentalist; with a sharp intellect; a dreamer with the vision to turn them to reality; a personality that does everything with his feet firmly planted upon reality; one to take cautious risks; one who believes in exchange of ideas yet with the uncanny ability to take firm decisions of his own; an impeccable listener with a vivid memory; can such a multifaceted personality be called anything better other than an eminent entrepreneur?

"Bhavarlal, what exactly is Jain Market Capitalization," was the question posed by *Saheb* to

me. It was late in the evening as we sat across at his official residence in New Delhi. I was taken aback slightly. He is often known to throw questions at us. He persisted, "Bhavarlal, what has been the rise in your turnover over the past three years? What is your Compound Rate of Growth (CAGR)?" For a moment I was confused. I said 26 per cent, a figure that I just threw in at the last moment. "Bhavarlalji, I remember you telling me that you did not draw a salary from the company; then how does your personal capital get raised?" Such a question left me dumbfounded. I replied, "*Saheb*, taking a salary from the company that I have set up myself will be akin to taking a maintenance charge from one's child, wouldn't it? If one has to take a closer look, my travel, medical costs are all incurred by the company; a separate salary would be redundant, don't you say?" "That's not right, Bhavarlalji. For a business to grow, capital is a



must. If you do not have personal capital, then your company's progress rate is bound to decline and your share in the company will depreciate. Others will get a chance to take over, don't you think so?" With this question, it was clear how far sighted the gentleman was and all this advice was just for friendship's sake. Needless to say, I got emotional.

Overcoming my emotions, I replied, "*Saheb*, you are right. But at the fag end of my career I do not think it appropriate to address this issue. I have four children who draw salaries or commissions. I am constantly striving to minimise my needs." "*Bhavarlalji*,

I understand your sentiments but it is not as it seems." *Saheb* looked troubled as he said this. Such and more occasions remain in memory. An entrepreneur like *Saheb* has such indepth knowledge and introspection was so apparent.

Once I was escorting *Saheb* on a flying tour of our fruit and vegetable processing unit. After observing it in detail, he said, "*Bhavarlalji*, you had asked me the feasibility of this project before embarking on it. At the time I had only said that this area is very deep. Nature's unpredictabilities, and fluctuating Government policies lead to volatile market. Keeping

these in mind, such units need personal attention and utmost care."

Now let me be more honest. In this unit, if one was to calculate the interest of the initial five years, I lost 50 crore rupees. Actually business hit rock bottom. If I had heeded *Saheb's* timely advice, it would have saved me some heart break. This thought got imprinted in my mind. However, moving on, the fruit and vegetable market looked up. Our skill and knowledge of the sector also got raised. Finally, the unit broke even and we heaved a sigh of relief. The journey was not only rocky but also extremely long. I paid a price for my headstrong nature. I was to blame for the loss.

Saheb is always concerned about the farmers' welfare. He strives to get them the best possible rates for their produce and does not falter to even create a furore at the government establishments, putting his own reputation at stake. *Saheb* does not support loan waivers, free fundings. Yet, for the sake of the farmers he does not hesitate to step back on his ideals. No other agriculture minister, in my opinion, has been able to give so much benefit to the farmer community other than *Saheb*. Some of his decisions have been wrong. Yet his intentions cannot be doubted. If anyone can be attributed the tough task of keeping the sweetness of the sugar industry alive, it has to be *Saheb*. He has always been there for his well wishers and this has always been looked down upon as a political move. This may be true but isn't it the prime duty of the agricultural minister to give the agriculture sector his all attention? Does he need to dabble in the sectors of Software, Telecom, Tourism?

Being the agriculture minister, his prime concern should be agriculture alone. Agreed that all this is the agriculture minister's job. But our *Saheb* is pro agriculture entrepreneurship. So, even the higher offices like the Prime Minister and others should not keep him away from his pet project.

I have never seen him turn down any invitation, be it, a conference, a symposium, a panel discussion, inauguration or any other. He is open to grasp anything that's novel. To my chagrin, at a meeting filled with national scientists and technology experts, he invited. This was definitely unprecedented. His vast knowledge as witnessed in this seminar, was simply mind boggling. An agriculturist to the bone, he displayed that he was a entrepreneur at heart. His pastime includes travelling across the globe to learn new initiatives. He does go overboard sometimes trying to translate the global knowledge for Indian benefit.

Conviction, enthusiasm, risk taker, officious, novelty seeker, dreamer; all this surface in this personality. Then would I be wrong if I call him an entrepreneur?

