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POLYMERS

Communique



Bhavarlal Jain
Founder Chairman
Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd.

SUCCESS

a Grassroots Phenomenon

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Plastic Packaging for
Nalen Gur

Applications of High
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Composites in Defence

Micro-cellular
Polymeric Foams:
A New Horizon

RAW FEED

In conversation with

P. K. Gupta
Executive Director
(Marketing – PC & Retail)
GAIL (India) Limited

Wim Roels
CEO
Borouge Pte Ltd

Success

A Grassroots Phenomenon

Continuous customers, users and nature centric innovation are the key requirements for any plastic processor to succeed, says Bhavarlal Jain in dialogue with POLYMERS Communiqué.

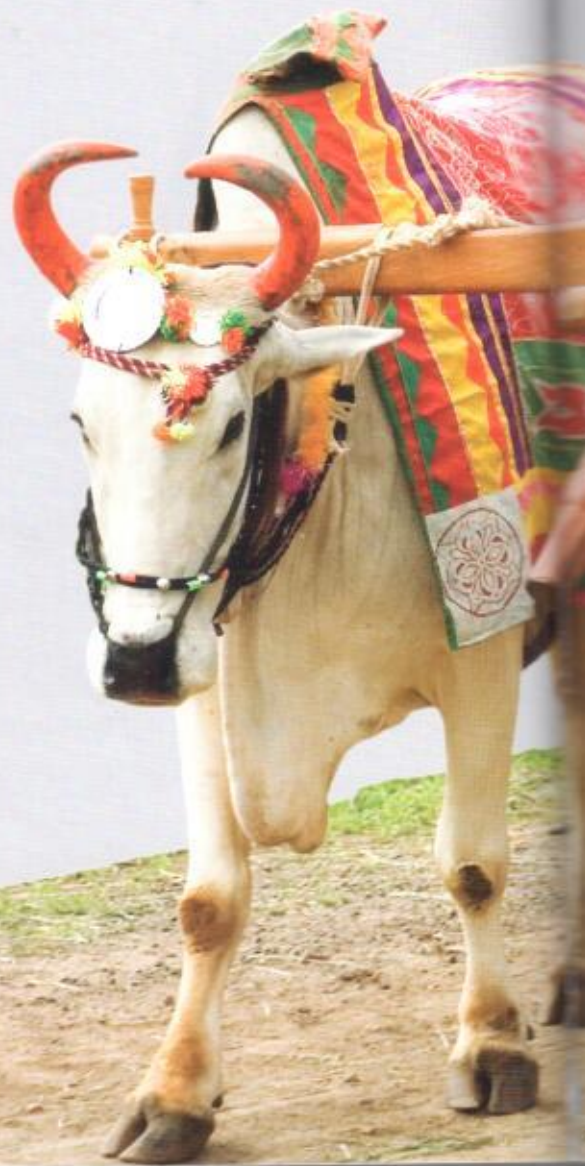
Q. Can you please highlight the growth expected in micro irrigation in India? What will be the impact?

Growth still will be governed by the capital formation in the hands of the farmers. It has to come more from the Government sector, but the private sector will also have to add its own might. The leading companies have to take the responsibility for R&D and invest in technologies which are futuristic.

Q. How pivotal has been the role of plastics in assisting the agri-sector in achieving its objectives?

Plastics contribute a lot in turning the agro sector from a vocation ruled one and dependent on the vagaries of nature to empowering the farmer to control his future to a much greater extent than was earlier possible. The applications are countless and there is an entire industry called plasticulture working on this.

The development and application of thermoplastic piping for water management and the refinement in techniques of micro irrigation for increasing efficiency of water usage are the greatest contributors to making farming sustainable



and its outcome more predictable. PVC bore hole casing, screen and column pipes are the materials of choice for ground water extraction. HDPE piping has proved to be unbeatable for water transmission, distribution and LLDPE drip laterals and tapes are delivering water from the smallest to the largest plants, both in tiny farms and giant farm holds in a dependable manner. Due to their inherent properties, plastics are long lasting and the cost of their installation is often fully recovered within the first three years of operation.

Q. The Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd. (JISL) global story is inspiring. What aspects of your culture you think helped Jain in building this global empire?

- All associates imbibing the culture of the company and taking it forward.

- Culture of being the owner of one's job, no matter what it could be, and to behave and act as if you are the owner.
- A culture of transparency, openness and a family.
- Promoting people from within the company, very loyal and committed associates who have spent many years, even decades with us.
- Leading by example by the top management.

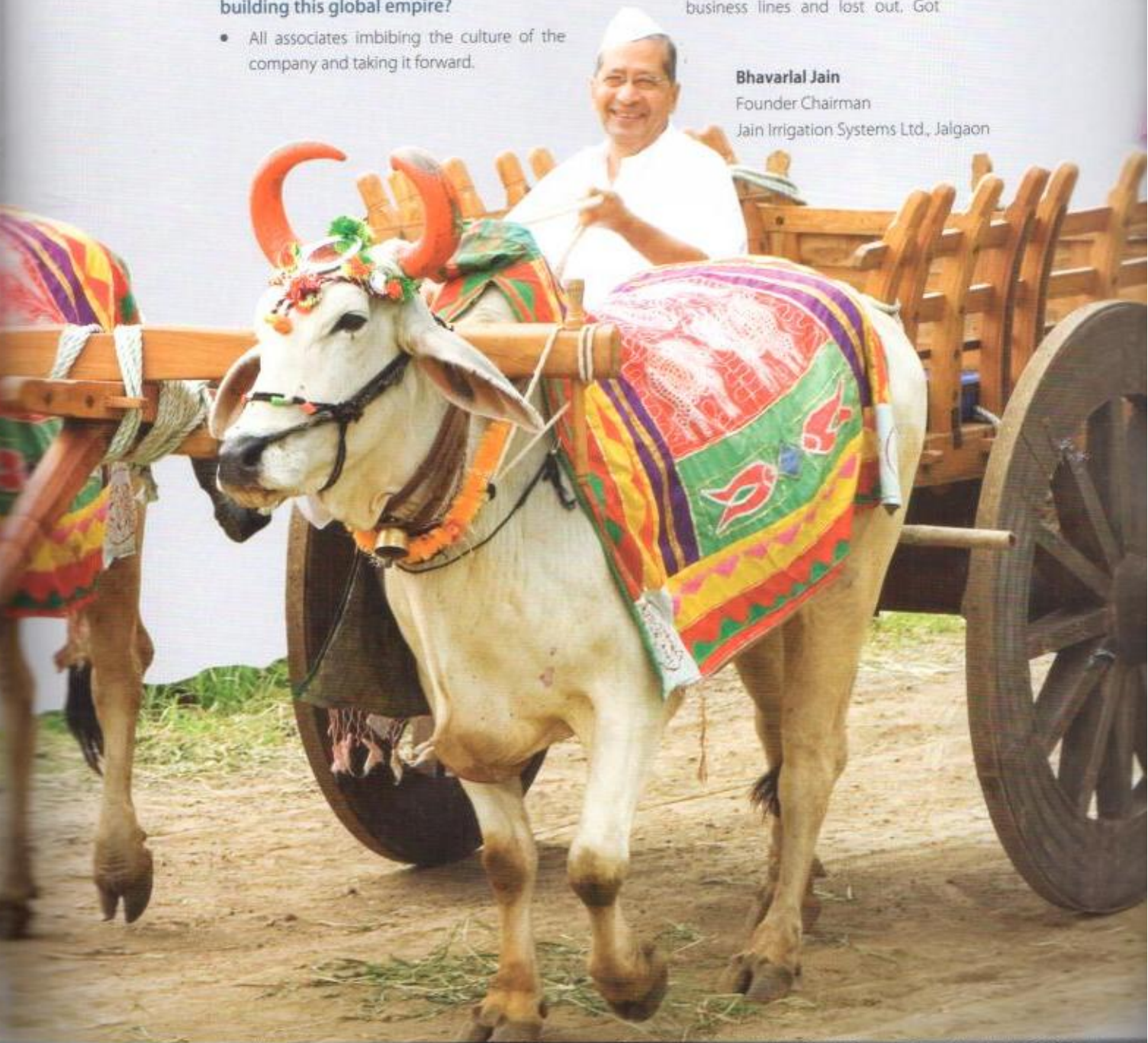
Q. As regards the JISL global story, did you encounter any setbacks? If yes, how were they surmounted?

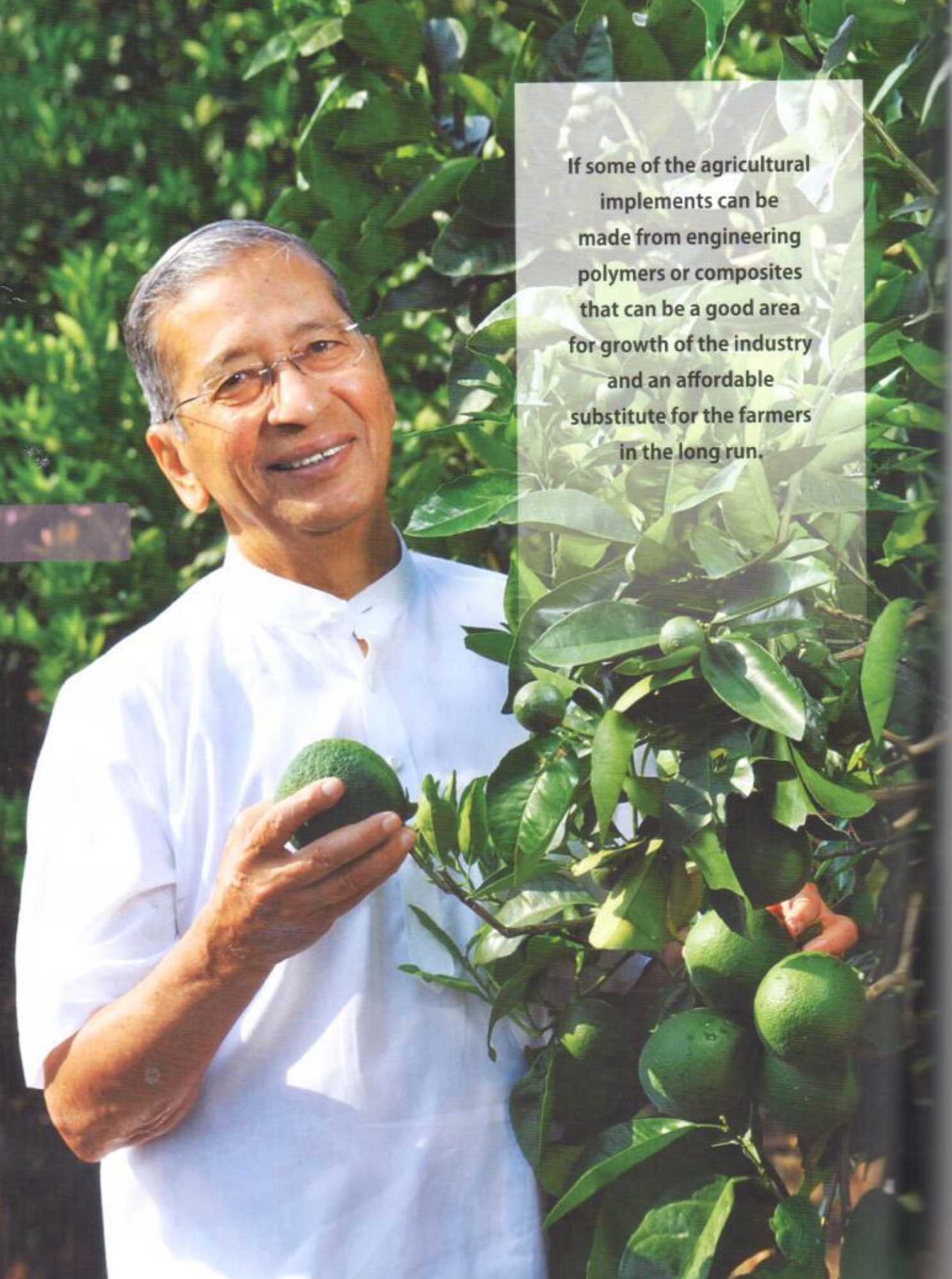
- Many setbacks ventured into non-core business lines and lost out. Got

Bhavarlal Jain

Founder Chairman

Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd., Jalgaon



A photograph of an elderly man with glasses, wearing a white short-sleeved button-down shirt, smiling and holding a large green citrus fruit (likely a calamansi or similar) in his right hand. He is standing in an orchard with many green leaves and several other green citrus fruits hanging from the branches. The background is a dense wall of green foliage.

If some of the agricultural implements can be made from engineering polymers or composites that can be a good area for growth of the industry and an affordable substitute for the farmers in the long run.

back on focus by liquidating all the non-core businesses and focused on agriculture and related industries.

- Cash flow crunch, due to Government delaying payments to the company.
- Change in the business model by creating an NBFC which can provide loans to farmers, while he pays full up front amount to the company and thereby the debt does not reside on the company balance sheet.
- Putting up green field projects in uncharted countries with vastly different cultural environment. Got these projects merged into profit making companies and that way cross subsidised their losses with incomes and tax savings of other profitable units.

Q. Does success originate from grassroots? What according to you are key requirements for a plastic processor to succeed in this era?

- Grassroots development certainly leads to success when there is passion backed by planning, strategy dedication and discipline. Micro irrigation was launched with all the above in place and continuously evolving action plans. Effective use of vernacular media and continuous engagement of all stake holders as well as the policy makers is vital.
- Continuous customers, users and nature centric innovation are the key requirements for any plastic processor to succeed. Alternate designs and models need to be developed in advance for dealing with unseen cost escalations which may make a product unviable for the user. Each of our efforts should be towards conserving nature and in tune with the environment. Our 1.65 MW bio gas based power plant is a perfect example: The waste of our mango and vegetable processing plants is converted into bio gas which feeds turbines generating power both, for own consumption and feeding to the grid. The residue from the bio gas reactor is excellent organic manure. Similar examples of zero discharge operations need to be developed in every commercial operation to enhance value addition at every possible step. Solar power generation should be adopted by all industries.

Q. What are the challenges of selling when your customer is a farmer? How different is selling to a farmer in the west world as compared to a farmer in the eastern countries?

- A corporate customer can be convinced about costing and the need for rate increases when the raw material price / US dollar increase sharply.
- However, a farmer and especially a small holder farmer cannot be treated in the same manner and the onus of insulating the farmer from the vagaries of international price increases and currency fluctuations lies with JISL.
- We need to absorb any additional cost to the maximum extent possible and also develop low cost systems simultaneously which can be offered to the farmer to save his crop at an affordable price.
- The farms in the western countries are large farms, at times extending to several thousand acres. Our solutions for these farms include remote weather monitoring with weather stations and centrally controlled automation. Most of these huge farms function with very few people manning them and are fully mechanised. The irrigation systems for these farms are also so designed that they are not damaged during mechanised land preparation and harvesting.

Q. Business beyond policy makers. Your thoughts please.

- Doing well by doing good is the moral we have experienced ourselves. When I ventured into business, my fundamental aim was to alleviate the burden of the small farmer, who toils without any control on the quantum of his farm yield as well as on the price he will get. There were just too many uncontrolled variables and we set out to control some of them. We found that when we ensure that the farmer gets adequate returns for his toil and pain, he faithfully compensates the organisation which has facilitated his success. Our success, therefore, lies in making the farmers prosperous.



Alternate designs and models need to be developed in advance for dealing with unseen cost escalations which may make a product unviable for the user.

- This process is unending; weather change and unseasonal rains and showers have thrown up new challenges as they wipe out months of effort in a few hours.
- Green houses and protected cultivation is one solution, albeit expensive and can be implemented by many farmers as a permanent solution. We have developed Jain solar powered green houses; with the solar panels doubling as shields from hail stones and water.

Q. The journey in the change of Jain Hills from 'brown' to 'green'.

The journey started with barren land and a dream. The land was then converted by using various watershed development techniques. Water conservation in catchment areas, wells to recharge groundwater and its carefully usage through micro irrigation, terracing and other farming techniques made Jain Hills the lush green landscape that it is today.

Q. Do you see any specific areas which plastic machinery manufacturers should address to help meet changing needs of the market?

If some of the agricultural implements can be made from engineering polymers or composites that can be a good area for growth of the industry and an affordable substitute for the farmers in the long run. We have done enough probably for the consumer sector. Can we now also focus on the agricultural sector?

Q. What next at Jain Irrigation?

- Focusing on renewable energy – solar. Making solar water pumps for farmers so that they can gain access to irrigation where there is no grid electricity, or save on diesel costs where they were previously using diesel pumps.
- Making the food business into a subsidiary – unlocking value and scope for lots of growth in the future with plans to launch brands in the retail space.
- Making Jain Irrigation as mostly a holding company and converting various divisions into subsidiaries is the thinking for the growth in the future. We have realised that growth on borrowed funds beyond a limit is not sustainable. Value creation through subsidiaries will be the way forward.

Q. Your message to gen-next.

Hard work and integrity, and a keen social conscience can alone underwrite a sustainable and successful life / career.

Q. What was your idea in building the 'Gandhi Teerth'?

I believe in the Gandhian values of peace, non-violence and truth. Today, more than ever, this world still needs those values and I created Gandhi Teerth so that these values may be communicated to and inculcated in the youth and the future generations to become ideal and peaceful citizens of the world while carrying forward this legacy of Gandhian life, thought and work. Gandhi Teerth is also a place where scholars can come and study the life of Mahatma Gandhi.