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# Land, Labour, and Library

## - A tribute to Mr Bhavarlal Jain

For late Shri Bhavarlal H. Jain, the founder chairman of the Jain Group, it was a long and arduous route to the path of success.

Despite being successful in the Maharashtra State Civil Services Exam, he opted out of a career in the government and started on his entrepreneurial journey in 1963.

Five years of dedicated work saw him emerging as market leader, in the whole range of petroleum products. This prompted him to diversify into automotive trade and take on the franchise of leading automobile manufacturers like Escorts, Leyland and Standard Motors.

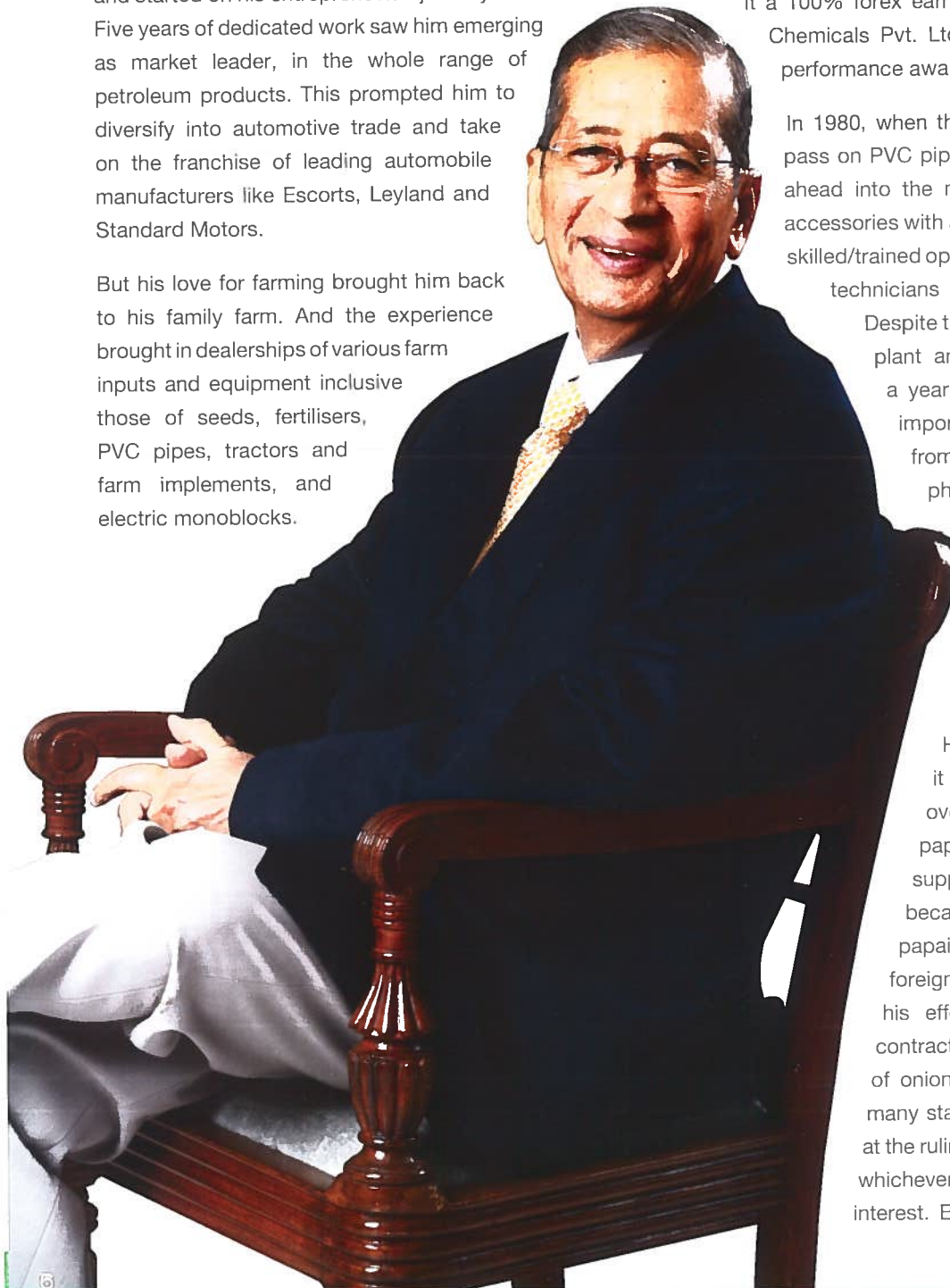
But his love for farming brought him back to his family farm. And the experience brought in dealerships of various farm inputs and equipment inclusive those of seeds, fertilisers, PVC pipes, tractors and farm implements, and electric monoblocks.

In 1978, Shri Jain made banana powder unit operative for the manufacture of Papain, a proteolytic enzyme. He encountered stiff resistance in marketing/exporting this new agro-based product. However, his tireless marketing efforts drew the attention of Papain users the world over, who recognised and accepted the superiority of the Refined Papain of India, making it a 100% forex earner and the company Jain Plastics & Chemicals Pvt. Ltd. was the recipient of many export performance awards thereafter.

In 1980, when the suppliers of PVC pipes refused to pass on PVC pipe manufacturing technology, he went ahead into the manufacture of rigid PVC pipes and accessories with a small Indian extruder. He neither had skilled/trained operators nor had any polymer scientists/technicians to handle PVC pipe manufacture.

Despite this, he went ahead with the production plant and surmounting all obstacles, within a year and a half, he was in a position to import a large sophisticated extruder from Cincinnati Milacron of Austria. Well phased expansion programmes enabled Jain Pipe enhance its capacity to 20,000 tonnes per annum by 1984. The next two years saw its other units in Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu increase the annual capacity by about 10,000 tonnes.

He introduced contract farming when it was not much in vogue and motivated over 2,500 small farmers to cultivate papaya, guaranteeing them minimum support price for their papaya latex. He became the first exporter of highly refined papain to advanced nations earning valuable foreign exchange. The trait continues. Today, his efforts have extended the benefits of contract farming directly to a vast number of onion, banana and mango growers across many states. They now buy back their produce at the ruling market price or the guaranteed price, whichever is higher - a bold departure for the larger interest. Exports of their world-class processed



fruits and vegetables have reached the five continents.

Shri Jain was acutely aware that water would remain a limiting factor for development. He propagated since 1980, use of the cost-effective, innovative, long-life and easy-to-handle PVC piping to replace conventional short length wasteful cement pipes - an idea which did herald a revolution in farm irrigation, benefitting millions of farmers. His success in PVC pipes prompted over 150 small scale manufacturers to set up such units across the country. PVC piping avoided only conveyance losses from the well to the field boundary. The distribution/irrigation losses continued. The pathfinder Mr. Jain studied micro-irrigation technology - MIT, which promised not only to conserve water at every stage but also to enhance farm productivity. However, it meant treading the path where many had failed. To win a tradition-bound farmer from age-old practice of furrow irrigation and get him to pledge his land for acquisition of hitherto unknown technology was both a herculean task and a challenge to his creative faculties. He decided to march ahead with an integrated approach.

## Burning Desire to Grow

In 1986, Shri Jain acquired a major share in EMCO Transformers. This was a sick unit running into losses. However, using his entrepreneurial skill he converted this unit into a high turnover and profit making company in a short span of two years.



He also set up Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd (JISL) in 1987 for supplying to farmers a new technological input in the field of micro (drip) irrigation systems in collaboration with James Hardie SRL (Italy), acknowledged leaders in the field. Before him, some of the multi-national companies had tried their best to popularise micro irrigation technology in India. Despite their prolonged efforts they had failed miserably. Jain therefore began analysis of the failures of those companies and succeeded in developing an integrated solution to market micro irrigation systems successfully. From a small capital

outlay of Rs 7.80 crore in 1987, the company now boasts of a turnover over Rs. 7000 crores. Even the growth of the drip (micro) irrigation systems has been phenomenal – from a meagre 1500 hectares in 1987 to over 5 million hectares today.

He has greatly contributed in improving the standard of living of small farmers by enabling/empowering them to be self-reliant through supply of high yielding planting materials, providing agronomic support, assisting in adopting hi-tech agri practices, buying back their produce at prices profitable to them, and sharing experiences of research and development in agriculture. This and his other contributions to agriculture have led universities to bestow four honorary doctorates and have won him numerous national and international awards. The prestigious Crawford Reid Award for promoting proper irrigation techniques, has been given to only two Asians till date. More recently the nation recognized his work and awarded him the Padmashree in 2008. He set up a huge Agri-Institute at Jain Hills with a faculty of agronomists and doctorates to train farmers from all over India and abroad on the latest farming methods. Shri Jain always used to mention that “we must feed the hands that feeds us” which is a testimony of the hard labour that the farmers undertake during their farming practice.

JISL became more focused in later years, concentrating on four businesses: agricultural inputs, food processing, plastic products and renewable energy. In the next five years, its



revenues grew by 46 per cent and earnings increased by 70%. It has now diversified into food processing such as dehydrated, concentrated and frozen fruits and vegetables, all by developing value chains with over 25,000 small farmers - a majority of whom have less than one hectare of land. 'Fruit and vegetable processing helps in aiding food security and ensures value addition for the farmers' produce. Not only is JISL the world leader in drip irrigation with pipe production, the third largest onion and vegetable dehydrator, the largest mango processor and the world's largest producer of tissue culture banana and pomegranate plantlets, it is also a pioneer

in using green energy and biogas with units equipped with solar pumps. Solar agricultural pumps and drinking water hand pumps are a great boon to rural India and they also help preserve, protect and promote the environment.

Shri Bhavarlal Jain, believed in Gandhi's notion of trusteeship, where wealth belongs not to an individual but should be used for the benefit of the community at large. Shri Jain's charitable trust (started in 1982) promotes education; health; sports; cultural; religious; spiritual and social spheres. The trust has adopted five backward villages in and around Jalgaon, and two schools: a world-class residential school named Anubhuti-1 which emphasizes Indian cultural heritage, interdependence and entrepreneurial abilities. There is another school named Anubhuti-2, which provides top-class free education in English medium to students whose families live below the poverty line. His Jain Sports Academy also nurtures young and raw talent particularly in rural areas, while his five general city clinics

offer healthcare solutions at nominal costs. His annual health camps provide free medical assistance to the needy, while his educational scholarships and employment opportunities encourage young adults to pursue a meaningful career.

Shri Bhavarlal Jain's efforts to preserve Mahatma Gandhi's ideals for posterity culminated in the Gandhi Research Foundation. Located amidst well-manicured lawns and a population-free zone, the Foundation houses a museum, an international research centre and well-preserved Gandhian archives. Inside the museum, the saga of India's freedom struggle comes alive through photographs, memorabilia and state-of-the-art multimedia aids like film and video clips, audio books, light and sound displays and sections modelled to depict significant incidents like the Swadeshi Movement.

Three words characterize this tall man: Land, Labour, and Library.

