

# TRADEFLOCK

## KUMAR NITESH

CEO

Ajio Business/  
Trends Footwear/  
Lee Cooper/Catwalk

10 BEST  
**CEOs**  
IN INDIA 2025



**BIG TAKE**  
Leadership is  
Lonely- And  
That's a  
Problem

Cyan Mookherjee,  
Founder,  
The Idea Guy  
| 221 B Baker ST.





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## Editor Note



## THE LEADERSHIP BLUEPRINT FOR A TRANSFORMING INDIA

Every economy has its defining decade—and for India, this is it. A dynamic consumer base, digital-first aspirations, and global ambitions are shaping a business environment rich with opportunity and responsibility. At the center of this transformation stands the modern CEO—decisive, agile, and deeply aligned with purpose.

This edition celebrates those who build beyond the balance sheet. Leaders who convert strategy into scalable impact, who elevate teams and transform industries. In boardrooms and on factory floors, from fintech corridors to manufacturing hubs, today's CEOs shape conversations around innovation, sustainability, diversity, and long-term value.

Navigating scale and complexity, they engineer growth by embracing clarity and conviction. They champion technology, invest in talent, and lead with empathy. When markets shift or policy evolves, they pivot—not react. When capital meets conscience, they turn intent into lasting value.

India's growth story demands bold leadership, not only in ambition but also in action. The CEOs featured in this issue offer blueprints worth learning from—across family enterprises, new-age startups, global corporations, and impact-driven ventures.

What unites them is vision. What defines them is execution.

This edition is for those who lead from the front and shape what's next. For those building legacies—not just businesses.

Here's to a generation of CEOs building India's future—brick by brick, byte by byte, belief by belief.

Happy reading!!!

  
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TRADEFLOCK'S  
**UPCOMING EDITIONS**

**10 Best  
Tech Leaders  
in India 2025**

**Best Corporate  
Leaders in India  
2025**

**Most Progressive  
Real Estate Leaders  
From Asia 2025**

**10 Best COOs in  
India 2025**

**Best Business  
Leaders from  
Singapore**

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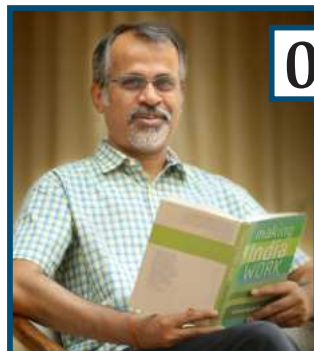
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## 10 BEST CEOs IN INDIA 2025

NAME	DESIGNATION	COMPANY
Gaurab Sen	CEO	Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation
Kumar Nitesh	CEO	Ajio Business/Trends Footwear/ Lee Cooper/Catwalk
Mohit Malhotra	CEO	Dabur International Ltd.
Pawan Kumar Chandana	Co-Founder & CEO	Skyroot Aerospace
Pillai C Sureshbabu	CEO & Founder	csPILLAI
Priyanka Saxena	Founding & Designated Partner	Clinilegal Wellbeing Solution LLP
Dr Ramesh V Sasanur	Global Head & Executive Director and CEO	Bhoruka Welfare (Bhoruka Group of Companies)
Dr Satbir Singh Kadian	CEO	Haryana Water Resources Authority
Supam Maheshwari	MD & CEO	First CRY
Tanveer Alam	Director and Country Manager	SCL Commercial India Pvt. Ltd.

# 10 BEST CEOs IN INDIA 2025



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CEO,  
Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation



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**Mohit Malhotra**  
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Dabur International Ltd.



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**Pawan Kumar Chandana**  
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**Priyanka Saxena**  
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Global Head & Executive Director and CEO,  
Bhoruka Welfare  
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# KUMAR NITESH

CEO,  
Ajo Business/Trends Footwear/  
Lee Cooper/Catwalk

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Lessons from Ajay Banga

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June 17, 1824

## STORY OF THE MONTH

Crash Course



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Retail isn't just about selling products—it's about designing ecosystems of behaviour. As technology compresses the distance between discovery and decision, and as consumers blur the lines between online and offline, the real challenge isn't growth — it's coherence. In this landscape, the leaders who matter most aren't those who react quickly, but those who see clearly. While many chase growth through trends and tech, Kumar Nitesh has built a career mastering something far more elusive: relevance that endures. Over two decades, he has shaped retail strategies across India, Southeast Asia, and the Gulf by focusing not on scale alone, but on what sustains it.

Over two decades, he has shaped retail strategies across India, Southeast Asia, and the Gulf by focusing not on scale alone, but on what sustains it. At Bata, he turned a \$6M loss into a \$50M profit and tripled revenues by tightening fundamentals. At Apparel Group MENA, he accelerated the rise of brands like Dune London, DSW, Naturalizer, Hush Puppies, Herschel ACO, Birkenstock and Crocs.

Now, as CEO of AJIO Business & Trends Footwear, he's creating India's next-gen retail engine through franchise-first models, digital integration, and a "B2B2C flywheel." With prominent national brands, He's building the most agile engine in fashion and footwear retail. His leadership rests on a clear, uncompromising philosophy:

Build businesses that scale with purpose, serve with relevance, and last beyond market cycles

In this exclusive conversation with TradeFlock, Kumar Nitesh discusses his journey across geographies, the hard-earned lessons he's learned, and the future he's shaping.

### Q How have your international experiences across India, MENA, and Southeast Asia shaped your leadership as a CEO?

Cross-cultural leadership doesn't just build adaptability but deepens empathy. Working in Bangladesh, Thailand, the Middle East, and across India, I understood that while retail formats may be global, consumer triggers are always local.

I learned to listen more closely, to observe how people shop, what fuels aspiration, and how trust is earned. We localised Western brands in the Gulf with subtle but powerful regional cues. In Southeast Asia, I learned to scale with simplicity, cutting through complexity to meet the market where it is.

## 10 Best CEOs in India 2025



Pioneering Change in Modern Retail Through Visionary Leadership

# KUMAR NITESH

CEO,  
Ajio Business/Trends Footwear/  
Lee Cooper/Catwalk

*These experiences taught me that the CEO's role is not to replicate success, but to reinterpret it contextually, with humility and insight.*

### Q What's the first strategic lens you apply when building a billion-rupee business—and what do you intentionally ignore?

I always begin with a single question: "**Where's the consumer friction?**" Whether you're building from scratch or reviving a legacy brand, value is created where real problems are solved.

I obsessively focus on front-end execution—store economics, assortment logic, service gaps—because that's where the business breathes. But in the early stages, I deliberately ignored vanity metrics. You don't chase scale—you earn it.

Instead, I zero in on unit economics, operating leverage, and consumer stickiness. If the core is strong and the fundamentals hold, scale becomes a consequence, not a goal.

### Q Retail is intensely operational. How do you avoid becoming a super-operator instead of a strategic CEO?

It's easy to get caught up in the operational grind, especially in Indian retail. But my compass is clarity. I believe in building systems that self-correct, not in firefighting every day.

I focus on empowering cross-functional KPIs, creating visibility through dashboards, and stepping back just enough to spot white spaces. I deliberately spend 30% of my time on what's next—new formats, emerging segments,



and digital adjacencies. That balance between running and reinventing the business is what separates an operator from a strategic CEO.

### Q What does operational excellence mean to you as a CEO, and how do you embed it across large retail ecosystems?

I've never believed operational excellence is about perfection. For me, it's about rhythm—predictability with agility.

In retail, the real magic happens when discipline meets decentralising. Every store runs as a profit center, and every function owns its metrics. "Data should drive accountability—but only when paired with field immersion." That's why I still walk stores and talk to teams. You can't lead from a dashboard alone. Culture is the real carrier of excellence. When front-liners start thinking like owners, you know you've built something that lasts.

### Q What strategies are vital for bridging India's organised-unorganised retail divide?

I don't think the future is to erase the unorganised—it's to upgrade it. In Tier 2 to 4 towns, value retail proves this every day. What works is aspirational affordability—offering branded experiences with neighbourhood proximity. "*The bridge won't be built by technology or capital alone, but by trust, training, and partnerships that uplift the ecosystem.*"

The key is a franchise-first model that empowers local entrepreneurs while giving them access to systems, supply chains, and scale. That's how we build something inclusive and sustainable.

### Q What role should CEOs play in reimagining consumer engagement as digital and physical retail converge?

*The consumer doesn't think in channels—they think in experiences. And so should we.*

Today's shopper scrolls, clicks, visits—and expects everything to feel like one brand. That's why I believe CEOs must lead from the lens of lifetime value, not channel. It's about fusing data, design, and delivery into a seamless, unified story.

I call it a B2B2C flywheel—blending B2B, B2C, and franchise flows to serve the consumer holistically. But real convergence isn't just tech—it's teams, incentives, and mindset. When that aligns, loyalty stops being earned—it becomes instinctive. ♦



*A Leader for Change,  
A Voice for the Voiceless*

## GAURAB SEN

CEO,  
Sasakawa - India  
Leprosy Foundation

Leadership today isn't just about boardroom decisions or bottom lines—it's about empathy, agility, and the courage to drive meaningful change. As industries evolve and the world faces new social, economic, and environmental challenges, the definition of leadership is quietly but unmistakably shifting.

The most impactful leaders today aren't the ones who merely command; they're the ones who listen, learn, and lead with a sense of purpose far beyond profits.

Gaurab Sen, Chief Executive Officer of Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation, represents this evolving leadership model. With over 20 years of experience in the development sector, his career has spanned a wide spectrum of human rights and social justice initiatives—from disability rights and gender equality to community-led development and advocacy. Before joining S-ILF, Gaurab held key positions with organisations such as the United Nations, DAHW German Leprosy and Tuberculosis Relief Association, and Hummingbird Foundation, consistently working at the intersection of policy, community engagement, and organisational strategy.

Since taking on the CEO role at S-ILF, he has led the Foundation's efforts to expand its reach across 18 Indian

states, decentralise operations, and strengthen livelihood and education initiatives for persons affected by leprosy and their families.

In this exclusive interaction with TradeFlock, Gaurab Sen reflects on his leadership journey, the evolving demands of the development sector, and the responsibility of driving meaningful, inclusive change.

### Q How have your diverse experiences in disability rights and social issues shaped your leadership style?

If someone had told me two decades ago that working with children with disabilities in a small town would shape my entire leadership journey, I wouldn't have believed them. But that's exactly where it began—on the ground, learning patience, empathy, and resilience without any formal degree, just real-life lessons from real people. I've always believed that "Leadership is a practice, not a skill."

Every cause I've worked on—from disability rights to human trafficking—taught me to lead by listening, unlearning, and standing beside those we serve, not ahead of them. That's the kind of leadership I carry with me every day.

### Q What challenges did you face while expanding S-ILF to 18 states, and how did you overcome them?

When we started expanding S-ILF beyond a few states, I quickly realised that growth on paper is easy—real growth happens when communities trust you. Each new state brought fresh challenges—cultural barriers, policy hurdles, and the deep-rooted stigma of leprosy. What helped me navigate this journey was something I've learned over the years: Experience is the Guru in everyone's life. It taught me to decentralise decisions, stay flexible, and build local partnerships that made our presence meaningful, not just widespread.

### Q What's the biggest lesson you've learned from working with marginalised communities?

Some of the most powerful lessons in my life didn't come from classrooms—they came from narrow lanes of leprosy colonies. Over the years, I've realised that people who've suffered the most aren't looking for sympathy; they're looking for dignity. "Those who have endured

the most seek not charity, but dignity."

Every time I visited these communities, I was welcomed not as an outsider but as one of their own. That taught me that real leadership isn't about recognition—it's about standing beside people and helping them reclaim their future on their own terms.

### Q If you could change one perception about leprosy, what would it be?

If I could wave a magic wand, I wouldn't erase the disease—I'd erase the judgment around it. For too long, people have believed that leprosy defines who you are. But the truth is, "The real affliction is not the disease itself, but the isolation and discrimination that come with it." Leprosy is just a medical condition; it doesn't take away a person's dreams, dignity, or right to belong.

### Q What are your plans for the next five years?

I've always believed that the journey of empowerment doesn't have a finish line—it keeps evolving. In the next five years, my goal is simple but ambitious: to ensure that people affected by leprosy are no longer seen on the margins but at the centre of society. I want to expand S-ILF's work to every state where leprosy colonies exist so that "The number of colonies decline, and the existing ones merge with regular settlements." More than that, I dream of seeing young people from these communities building dignified lives and their stories making headlines, not because of their struggles—but because of their success.

### Q Unplugged: Beyond The Boardroom

Balance isn't found—it's created.

Beyond boardrooms, I recharge through meaningful moments: walking among leprosy colonies where I'm welcomed as family, finding perspective in books and history, and embracing cultures through travel. My personal space is sacred—I unwind by cooking, watching Hindi films, and exploring the world. So far, I've travelled to 28 states, 4 Union Territories and 14 Countries—and each place has added something special to how I lead and live. ♦

# WHY INDIAN B-SCHOOLS ARE GOING BEYOND THE MBA TO BUILD REAL FOUNDERS

## Gaurav Bhagat

Founder, Gaurav Bhagat Academy

### Why Business Schools Are Changing

India is seeing a huge startup boom. By the end of 2024, over 1.57 lakh startups were officially registered. But many graduates are still not ready for jobs. This is because regular classes don't always teach real-life business skills. To fix this, many schools and programs are now teaching students how to start and run real businesses.

### Government Schemes Are Helping

The government has started many schemes to support young entrepreneurs. Startup India offers free online courses, mentorship, and help with registration. Skill India now includes entrepreneurship training. Its digital platform connects learning with startup help. Programs like NSDC also give students access to business loans and job placements.

### What Business Schools Are Doing

Top B-schools are setting up special centers to support student founders. IIM Ahmedabad's CIIE (now IIMA Ventures) has mentored 7,000+ founders and backed 1,500+ startups. IIM Bangalore's NSRCEL offers an 8-month program for entrepreneurs, teaching key subjects like finance and marketing. Other IIMs and tech colleges also run startup fellowships and hands-on workshops.

### Support from NGOs and Foundations

NGOs are also playing a big role in training young founders. Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust (BYST) has helped launch 12,000 businesses and created over 3.5 lakh jobs. Wadhvani Foundation has trained 2 lakh+ students, supported 7,000+ startups, and trained 5,000 teachers to teach startup skills. In rural

areas, Deshpande Foundation trains youth in small business skills through its I-NCUBATE program.

### Private Academies Make a Difference

Private academies also offer hands-on business training. One of India's leading sales training academies, GBA has been training students and professionals in skill enhancement, sales and leadership. Its programs have helped participants improve sales across all kinds of job roles and close more deals and campaigns.

### Why This Matters

Startups in India have already created 1.5 million jobs. MSMEs now employ over 111 million people and contribute nearly 29% of India's GDP. With the right training, students can become job creators, not just job seekers. These programs are building the next generation of business. ♦



Editor's Pick



# THE NARCISSIST IN THE BOARDROOM

When Confidence Crosses into Corporate Pathology

The world of high-level management is a stressful place where confidence has been turned into a glamorised precondition of success. Those CEOs that are described as visionary, risk-takers and charismatic orators tend to have a cult-like following among investors as well as employees. But when confidence crosses into the territory of narcissism, it can wind up becoming a kind of time bomb within organisations: generating sick cultures, ethical blind spots, and years of dysfunction.

### Is it Charisma or Conceit?

Narcissistic leaders seem charismatic, confident, and ambitious, mimicking effective leadership. However, they often possess entitlement, manipulation, lack of empathy, and hypersensitivity to criticism. The Journal of Business Ethics notes narcissistic CEOs take excessive risks, overrate performance, and suppress dissent. This creates a unique corporate pathology that hides in plain sight.

Dr. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, psychologist and author of *Why Do So Many Incompetent Men Become Leaders?*, explains that narcissistic leaders may succeed short-term as disrupters, but they ultimately undermine trust, suppress diverse voices, and disrupt culture.

### Toxic Patterns in Action

Although narcissistic leadership may be hard to detect initially, its effects are highly corrosive. These types of leaders tend to micromanage and present it as an attitude of ensuring excellence, whereas the truth is that it is a sign of not trusting others. They are prone to gaslighting or dismissing constructive criticism and turning difficulties into signs of disloyalty instead of treating them as learning opportunities. It is also common to narcissists to claim all the credit in case of successes, downplaying the role of teams or peers.

Also, they are compulsively interested in external approval, i.e., in media attention, awards, or stock success and ignore internal happiness.

Another widespread symptom of narcissistic influence is frequent turnover among leadership teams as a result of conflicts or burnout.

### The Reasons Organisations Become Stuck

Narcissism and visionary leadership are two aspects that are mistaken by many boards and stakeholders. The hero CEO type is still ingrained in business culture, particularly within the technological, media, and financial sectors. Narcissists tend to climb the ladder by developing influential friends, manipulating the narratives, and ensuring that they appear indispensable. As a recent McKinsey study found, red flags may be waiving years unnoticed in this charisma-fuelled rise.

### Guard the Boardroom against Ego-Leadership

The issue of narcissism in leadership requires systemic change, not just psychological diagnostics. Organisations must redefine success in leadership to include empathy, teamwork, and humility alongside financial metrics. Implementing 360-degree feedback in executive assessments can better reflect interpersonal relationships and behaviours.

We must encourage cultures of dissent and reward ethical decision-making. Ethical violations, irrespective of an executive's history or marketability, must be addressed consistently and transparently to establish a strong tone at the top.

### Ego to Ethics

The greatest leaders are not the most vocal or the most confident ones; they are the ones who can lead with integrity, understanding of themselves, and the desire to see the group advance. In the modern, complicated corporate environment, it is no longer a matter of choice to understand when confidence becomes pathological. It is an inevitable measure towards the creation of healthy, high-performing, and ethical organisations. ♦

# LEADING WITHOUT AUTHORITY

## The Art of Delegating Across Teams

Delegation is an essential leadership skill, but it becomes especially complex when the person you're delegating to doesn't report directly to you. Whether it's cross-functional collaboration, project-based influence, or matrix-style management, these situations are increasingly common in today's organisations. When the traditional hierarchy is less visible, leaders have to handle egos, politics and unseen factors to give out

responsibilities without having the formal authority.

### Be Aware of the Group Dynamics

When delegating, make sure you first know how the people involved interact. Ask yourself:

Analyse the reasons and goals behind what leads this person to teach.

What are the current main concerns of these companies?

To whom does the police force answer?

Harvard Business Review

(HBR) asserts that mastering power dynamics in a matrixed organisation is fundamental to getting things done. You can't delegate effectively if you don't understand what the other person stands to gain or lose.

### Influence Others by Word, Rather than Authority

If you do not have formal control, your ability to impact decisions becomes very important. McKinsey reports that leaders who do

well without formal authority depend on empathy, trust, and building a sense of unity. Build a connection with your colleagues.

Present requests to others by stressing that both parties have something in common.

Relate the delegated activity to future achievements of the organisation.

Let employees meet with leaders in the organisation as one of the benefits.

### Address personal and emotional challenges.

People may refuse to delegate when they feel their control, skills, or importance are being questioned. Having emotional intelligence here matters most.

Deloitte's study has found that leaders with emotional intelligence have a major advantage in managing teams from several areas of the organisation. To deal with people's egos:

Appreciate and recognise what the individual knows and has experienced.

Avoid micromanaging.

See the task as something people work on together rather than telling them exactly what to do.

If the project focuses on someone's area of expertise, respect their judgement and agree with it. Suggest that they explain how they would go about solving the problem because they are more familiar with it. Involving them makes them work side by side rather than giving them directives.

### Tell People Clearly About What You Want

Failing to communicate clearly when you delegate leads to problems and arguments. Make your goals, timeframe

and expectations clear to the other person. Define:

The goals that represent success for the organisation.

Where their decisions are not directed or controlled by others.

Whenever two or more people need to work on a document.

KPMG's research found that clarity about team member roles leads to more task ownership and less conflict in cross-functional teams.

### Use the principle of giving and taking in relationships.

If you don't control when someone is available, bear in mind the importance of give and take. How can you thank them for helping?

Do you know if they would be open to meeting with a decision-maker from the organisation?

Are you able to give them information or data they consider important?

Are you able to support the initiatives they begin in the future?

Being repaid in kind can be a very powerful incentive. According to Forbes, forming reciprocal partnerships inspires people to trust one another and rely on each other.

### Utilise the strength of reviews and recommendations

Getting traction might involve inviting others to contribute. Following the actions of the group encourages people to work together.

Indicate the organisations or people that are participating in the initiative.

Make sure to mention support from the organisation's leadership.

Encourage them by saying that most people they know are using the technology.

It quietly tells readers that being involved is both useful and required. If possible, get a shared manager or sponsor to frame the delegation as a joint priority. A message from someone they report to can carry more weight.

### Answer Resistance using calm techniques.

Even with the best intentions, some opposition does appear. If the person disagrees with you:

Don't escalate. Keep yourself calm and interested in what happens.

Ask the applicant to explain in detail what they are most worried about with this request.

Give people other choices or some wiggle room.

As Harvard Business Review describes, leaders who ask questions more than impose their views usually preserve good relationships and find new ideas that improve the project.

### Influence is Rising as a Form of Leadership

Being a good leader often requires delegating tasks over which you do not have authority. Strong leaders show emotional intelligence, plan their messages well, and share the benefits with others. It is important for CFOs, team leads, and project owners to be good at this ability when things happen fast and responsibilities are shared.

Highly successful leaders realise that having authority is useful, but influence helps you connect with others. The connections you make at work also drive projects along. ♦

10 Best  
**CEOs**  
in India 2025*Blending Heritage with Global Ambition***MOHIT  
MALHOTRA**CEO,  
**Dabur International Ltd.**

In 19th-century India, the seeds of Dabur were sown and a legacy grounded in wellness and rooted in local trust. Fast forward to the 21st century, Dabur's shelves are now stocked across four continents, yet the heart of its mission remains unchanged. The baton carrying this legacy today belongs to Mohit Malhotra, a visionary leader who has preserved Dabur's traditional ethos and propelled it into a bold, global future.

**From Classroom to Corporate:  
Early Foundations**

Born in Delhi and shaped in Pune and New Delhi, Mohit Malhotra began his career journey with strong academic credentials, a management degree from Pune University followed by an Executive Masters in International Business from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Delhi. In 1994, he joined Dabur as a Management Trainee, stepping into a company that would become the canvas for his lifelong work.

**Marketing, Sales and the  
International Leap**

In his early years at Dabur, Mohit took the helm on crucial marketing and sales assignments, learning the intricate nuances of brand building and consumer outreach. A pivotal turn came in 2001 when he became Business Head for the EU markets—a role that would test and polish his leadership on an international stage.

By 2004, he relocated to Dubai as Head of International Marketing, and just four years later—marked by deep knowledge and keen

strategic instincts—he was appointed CEO of Dabur International in 2008. It was under his leadership that Dabur began penetrating the US and European markets, turning its Indian Ayurvedic roots into a transnational consumer-goods powerhouse.

**Redefining Dabur on the World Stage**

As CEO of Dabur International, Mohit wasn't merely exporting products; he was translating an age-old heritage to resonate with diverse global audiences. He earned recognition among Forbes Middle East's top Indian executives for four consecutive years, and in 2014 received the "International Achievement Award" at the CEO Middle East Awards. These honours underscore his ability to fuse traditional knowledge with modern strategies, positioning Dabur International as a respected global brand.

**A Homecoming and a Steady Ascent**

By April 2019, Dabur's board named him Chief Executive Officer of Dabur India Ltd, succeeding Sunil Duggal, after a carefully managed succession process. Backed by more than 25 years within the company, he now stood at the helm of India's \$1.2 billion FMCG behemoth, overseeing every facet, from domestic operations to global market expansions.

**Covid, Inflation & Rural Slowdown**

The path since his ascension hasn't been smooth. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted supply chains, changed consumer behaviour, and reshaped markets. Malhotra responded: "Our learnings from Covid have forged us into a more responsive, resilient, and responsible organisation". Inflation and rural slowdown further challenged Dabur's volumes. Yet, under his guidance, the company expanded rural outreach. In FY21-22, covered villages jumped from ~59,000 to ~89,800—achieving two years' targets in just one. The result? Rural volume growth outpaced urban, by nearly 400 basis points, in FY24. Malhotra often cited electoral cycles, infrastructure investments, and strategic product innovation as factors likely to fuel recovery in these markets.

**Power Brands. Product Innovation.  
Performance**

Under Malhotra's leadership, Dabur's powerhouse categories have soared. In FY22, consolidated revenue crossed ₹ 10,889 crore (~\$1.05 bn), growing 14% year-on-year. Every

strategic business vertical, healthcare, home & personal care, food & drink, showed strong double-digit growth.

In FY22, bloom returned: domestic revenues exceeded ₹ 8,000 crore, while international sales topped ₹ 2,800 crore. Overseas markets including Middle East, Asia and Africa, accounted for some 72% of that global business. Meanwhile, Dabur India made decisions like launching a new plant in South India, affirming a commitment to decentralised growth.

**Leadership Recognition and  
Distinction**

Mohit Malhotra's global journey has consistently garnered acclaim. In the UAE and Middle East, he was celebrated by CEO Middle East and Forbes, while being named NRI Professional of the Year (Times Now & ICICI) in 2016. Domestically, he's widely praised for pivoting Dabur's focus, balancing premiumisation in urban zones with affordability in village markets.

**Navigating Industry Challenges  
with Human Insight**

As a leader, Malhotra has consciously shed hierarchical constraints, promoting a culture where employees at all levels can speak freely and experiment without fear of failure. His tenure has emphasised a "fearless" organisational mindset, embracing failures as stepping stones to long-term growth.

**Seeds of the Future**

Mohit Malhotra's arc mirrors that of the organisation he leads: both rooted in tradition, both flourishing into global resilience. From a trainee in 1994 to stewarding a consumer goods giant—his journey embodies strategic rigor and deeply human leadership. In navigating pandemics, inflation, and shifting markets, he's not merely managed transitions—he's shaped them. As Dabur continues to spread the tenets of Ayurveda and nature-based wellness worldwide, it does so under a leader who understands that true growth blends respect for heritage with audacious reinvention.

In Rural villages, urban shelves and international bazaars, Mohit Malhotra stands at the intersection of all three. His story is a testament to how personal vision can resonate across continents—and how one man's journey can echo in every household that welcomes Dabur's legacy into their lives. ♦



## LESSONS FROM

# AJAY BANGA

President, World Bank & Former CEO, Mastercard

Because of economic uncertainties, huge gaps in wealth between countries and extremely fast digital change, Ajay Banga now stands out as a modern leader. As President of the World Bank and CEO of Mastercard, Banga merged being a business leader with helping communities, showing that businesses can care and act worldwide.

From his simple beginnings in India to taking charge of two of the world's biggest organisations, Ajay Banga has created a forceful example of purposeful, resilient, and inclusive leadership. Here's a look at his leadership legacy and the enduring lessons it offers today's leaders.

### Beginning Modestly to Today's Wide Reach

Born in Pune, India, in 1959, Banga's early years were impacted by strict discipline, studying, and exposure to multiple perspectives from his family's military background and academic path. Having graduated from economics and the Indian Institute of Management, he started a career that took him globally.

Banga continues to promote merit-based decisions, empathy, and accountability in any location, whether in India, the U.S., or on international boards.

#### Lesson to Learn

Leadership skills are developed outside of the boardroom. They begin with a firm set of values, strict self-control, and a willingness to learn from many cultures.

### Mastercard focuses on Driving Inclusive Capitalism.

When he was CEO of Mastercard from 2010 to 2020, Banga made the company a tech leader in financial services and global financial inclusion. With Ajay working at the helm, Mastercard's market capitalisation doubled, just as the company doubled its efforts to help over 500 million people enter the formal economy.

He emphasised that companies can grow their businesses and work for positive social causes. By adopting new technologies, teaming up with different organisations, and being committed to diversity, he switched the organisation's mission from transaction services to helping people build their finances.

#### Lesson to Learn

Profit with purpose isn't a trend, it's a strategic mindset. Leaders build businesses that uplift communities, not just shareholders.

### Supporting Diversity and Inclusion

Banga supports diversity, equity and inclusion to fulfil quotas and drive progress and new ideas. As CEO at Mastercard, he made it so that top executives' pay depended on the company's



efforts to promote inclusion and gender equality in leadership posts.

He handled broader challenges by launching projects that gave women, minorities and underrepresented groups more chances to get jobs and use products.

#### Lesson to Learn

Inclusion goes beyond human resources concerns. It is a basic part of leadership that influences the organisation's culture, credibility, and achievements.

### Leadership in a Crisis that is both Calm and Understandable

The early 2010s financial problems and the COVID-19 pandemic showed Banga's ability to make calm, focused and people-focused choices.

Instead of backing off, he helped Mastercard move ever faster with digital payments, assist small businesses and get involved in public-private partnerships to cope with economic shocks. His plan for crisis situations emphasised open dialogue, understanding others' feelings and thinking long-term, instead of panicking.

#### Lesson to Learn

Real leaders in a crisis tend to remain calm, provide clear information and focus on supporting their team.

### World Bank Role in Expanding to Global Good

It was in 2023 that Banga became the first Indian person to head the World Bank. This

appointment marks a move toward including businesses and being more open-minded to handle global matters such as poverty, climate change and inequality.

Banga is working to improve performance, teamwork and effectiveness in using resources for developing countries within the World Bank.

He sees climate resilience, secure food supplies, gender equality, and strong digital infrastructure as linked and necessary to make economic development environmentally friendly.

#### Lesson to Learn

Leadership changes must honour past results and set new goals for the future. Systems need people who can see the issues from both business and human perspectives.

### Connecting sectors

Banga is particularly skilled at bringing together governments, companies, international organisations, and civic groups. At Mastercard and the World Bank, he has built ties with groups outside his own company. He believes global issues should be dealt with through partnership, not competition.

As co-chair of the U.S.-India CEO Forum and advisor on climate finance for the General Assembly,

#### Lesson to Learn

We see that, in the future, working as a team is key to great leadership. It takes all sectors and organisations to face and solve major problems.

Banga takes a leading new approach: getting different groups to work on common issues.

### My leadership philosophy focuses on humility, urgency, and service to others.

He has always focused on offering service to his customers. Leadership, in his view, involves responsibility instead of privilege, and people say he is accessible, unaffected, and dedicated to his staff.

He thinks working fast is not enough and always emphasises the idea that doing right leads to doing well. He leads the company using insights from effective business practice and a set of moral values.

#### Lesson to Learn

True legacy is created outside of the names you have. It's based on leaders putting the interest of others first, mainly those without authority.

### An Important Player for a Global Age

Banga's approach to leadership shows others how to be impactful today by being courageous, moral, welcoming, and aware of the future. In boardrooms and development banks, he has demonstrated that leaders should benefit shareholders and society rather than only focusing on their profit.

While his journey continues, we can already tell that Ajay Banga runs Mastercard with both knowledge and care. Today, such leadership is precisely what we require. ♦

10 Best  
**CEOs**  
in India 2025



*Engineering India's  
Private Space Revolution*

# PAWAN KUMAR CHANDANA

**Co-founder, CEO & CTO,  
Skyroot Aerospace**

Long before rockets with “Made in India” labels were soaring into space, Pawan Kumar Chandana was a curious child in Telangana, sketching launch vehicles in the margins of his notebooks and dreaming of distant galaxies. Years later, that fascination turned into a mission, to reach space and to democratise access to it. After working at ISRO and contributing to some of India’s prestigious space programs, Pawan realised that the private sector had a vital role to play in accelerating the future of space exploration. That realisation led to the birth of Skyroot Aerospace, co-founded with like-minded visionary Naga Bharath Daka. As CEO & CTO of Skyroot, Pawan now leads India’s first private company to successfully launch a rocket, Vikram-S, into space.

## The Eureka Moment: Redefining Space Access from India

By 2018, with the example of international space pioneers and the new Indian policy environment, Pawan, together with a colleague, Naga Bharath Daka, had a vision of democratising space. He noticed that India could manufacture cheap rockets, but the demand for satellites was increasing exponentially, and the frequency of launches and accessibility were lacking. He pointed out that space access is cost-prohibitive and not very reliable. It was at that point that they started Skyroot Aerospace in June 2018

## Meeting the Challenge: Building Space Tech from Scratch

Skyroot started with only 10 employees in the T-Hub incubation centre in Hyderabad. They had several obstacles: the absence of governmental policies, the absence of the private testing infrastructure, the shortage of deep-tech talent, and the absence of experience in entrepreneurship. The pandemic put things on hold-and it also spurred change. By the middle of 2020, lax regulations, an MoU with ISRO, and seed capital allowed it to test major engines.

## Innovating Under Pressure: Tech Breakthroughs

Skyroot, under the leadership of Chandan, was the first to introduce a number of new technologies:

Raman-1: The first Indian privately developed hypergolic upper-stage engine, bench-tested in July 2020.

Kalam-5 and Kalam-100: Carbon-composite solid fuel engines tested in December 2020 and May 2022, respectively. The latter is the largest rocket stage in the history of the Indian private sector.

Dhawan -1: Cryogenic engine LNG/LOX, tested in November 2021.

Stage separation system: Pneumatic, ultra-low shock separation system, qualified mid-May 2025, the key to the next Vikram-I mission.

These inventions demonstrated progressive engineering- carbon composites, regenerative LNG technology, 3D-printing, and light-weight pneumatic systems.

## Historic Firsts: Vikram-S to Orbit-Bound Vikram-I

Skyroot successfully launched the Vikram-S, India first privately developed sub-orbital rocket, to 89.5km altitude on November 18, 2022. It confirmed avionics, propulsion and structural designs, the foundation of Vikram-I, which is to launch into orbit by the end of 2025.

## Industry Impact & Scaling Strategy

To Pawan Kumar Chandana, the role of CEO and CTO of Skyroot has been instrumental in the growth of the company in the private space industry. Skyroot has assembled a team of more than 350 professionals, including the best minds in mechanical, electronic and avionics engineering under his leadership.

Chandana has been able to raise approximately \$68 million, which began with \$11 million in Series A in May 2021, then followed by \$4.5

million in bridge/B/B rounds in January 2022, and lastly, the \$27.5 million in pre-Series C funding in October 2023. More importantly, he has established strategic alliances with ISRO since 2020 and has access to test facilities, which is an unprecedented privilege for a private player. Chandana has also managed to successfully manoeuvre the liberalised space policy of India to set Skyroot on international horizons. Skyroot has a vision to offer small-lift launches on-demand and customisable, similar to a taxi service, as opposed to the bus or train model of SpaceX.

## Accolades & Recognition

Chandana and Skyroot have achieved a high level of popularity due to the many prestigious awards that demonstrate their innovativeness and contribution to the space and startup ecosystem. They have won the ISRO Best Innovative Product and Idea Award in 2016 and the Aerospace Engineering Division Prize of the Institution of Engineers in 2018. In 2020, the Government of India honoured them with the National Startup Award and the Aegis Graham Bell Jury Choice Award in 2020 (presented in 2021).

In 2021, Skyroot was awarded the Pride of Telangana Startup Achiever and the Telangana Best Innovator Award. In 2022, they won the National Technology Startup Award in the category of excellence in cryo, liquid and solid propulsion technologies. Skyroot also appeared in the Top 25 Startups in LinkedIn India in 2021, and ranked seventh, and Chandana was included in Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia list in 2020, and in the India Today Young Achiever list in 2020 and 2022 respectively.

## Overcoming Key Challenges

Chandana addressed multiple formidable problems:

Infrastructure & Testing: Built indigenous engine and stage test facilities.

Technical Mastery: Developed proprietary carbon composite, cryogenic, and pneumatic systems.

Talent Scarcity: Recruited deep-space experts despite national shortage.

Financing: Secured significant capital in India’s nascent private space investment environment.

Policy Framework: Aligned with Space Department reforms to access ISRO facilities and partnership frameworks.

## Conclusion: Charting India’s Path to the Stars

The story of Pawan Kumar Chandana, an ISRO scientist and a space entrepreneur, reflects the privatisation of space dreams

in India. He and Bharat Daka have turned Skyroot into a modern space-tech firm that marries innovation with cost-effective launch economics and is focused on making space as commonplace as flying an aeroplane.

Skyroot is beginning a commercial phase with the launch of Vikram-I later in 2025, and Chandana is its dual CEO. His narrative indicates how profound technical knowledge, entrepreneurial spirit, and policy synergy can catapult the Indian space ecosystem into the international space-opening space not only to satellites but also, perhaps, to the entire humanity. ♦



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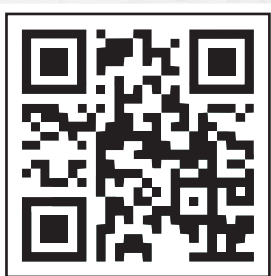
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# Leadership is Lonely - And That's a Problem

Cyan Mookherjee,  
Founder, The Idea Guy | 221 B Baker ST.

It's 2.11 AM IST on a Monday morning, and I start to scribble on this topic because it's close to my heart.

## Work: Mommy Issues

A company is a Founder's baby. Just like a mother, it's a full-time job of complete dedication and commitment. The Founder seeks a Partner in Crime. However, it's next to impossible to match the enthusiasm the Founder will have. That's exactly where the frustration sets in. I often get angry about why the other person is not passionate about the idea I want to implement. This idea will, in the long run, benefit everyone. Like a mother, the founder looks from a long-term perspective, which the associates won't be able to do. Even long-term colleagues can grow distant. As founders race ahead, others may hit a ceiling. And the gap grows. **Solution:** The Leadership must speak regularly with their team members and communicate their vision. The vision statement needs to be spoken in the team members' language. Also, "Your company becomes the people

you hire." Hire the folks who have the insatiable hunger to learn and, most importantly, implement the same.

## What's in it for me?

The Founder works extremely long hours (remember Narayan Murthy?) and expects others to do the same. When someone doesn't do that, the Leadership starts to look down upon the associate as lazy and not hardworking creating distance and loneliness.

**Solution:** The employee will never get the same paycheck like Leadership and we need to acknowledge that. Incentivise associates whenever they work extra hours or publicly acknowledge their extra efforts. This motivates them to go the extra mile.

## GenAI in the Bottle:

While the leadership of every organization untaps the potential of GenAI, they are extremely worried if their business will become obsolete. Also, the Leadership has no choice as customer expectations will keep on increasing due

to hyper customization and segmentation. The associates share the same fear as well thinking if an Agentic AI or a chatbot will be their replacement and start to look upon the management with mistrust and thus creating alienation and loneliness.

- **Solution:** The Leadership needs to be transparent and make team members a part of the GenAI transformation. Think tanks must investigate scenarios where GenAI can be put into action and assign Team Members to implement it. This creates an environment of collaboration and elicits 360-degree confidence. Outside of work, family and friendships suffer. The work never ends, and while you're physically present, mentally you're putting out fires. But this too can be managed. Set boundaries. Prioritize health and relationships. Even scheduling family time on your calendar helps. It's now 4:39 AM—and I just remembered I have a client demo soon. Classic. ♦

# THE RISE OF THE CHIEF AI ETHICS OFFICER

## A New Standard for Responsible AI Governance

Since AI systems are now a big part of ordinary business workflows, responsible AI governance is no longer just a theoretical concern. Because of progress in AI, the importance and risks of Generative AI models and similar technologies are at an all-time high. Due to recent developments, the Chief AI Ethics Officer (CAIEO) position is now getting a lot of attention. Or is it not reasonable to ask every company to have one?

### Responsible AI Is On The Rise

AI impacts economies, influences behaviour, and enables choices otherwise impossible. This power creates issues: biases in algorithms, data misuse, hard-to-justify decisions, and ethical lapses that harm a company's reputation, worsen inequality, and break rules.

A 2024 Deloitte survey revealed that 62% of global firms are rapidly adopting AI, yet only 38% have formal AI ethics frameworks. This has prompted a re-evaluation of racism. Investors, regulators,

and consumers demand more responsibility from AI-using businesses.

In 2023, McKinsey noted that unethical AI is primarily a leadership issue, not just a technological one. Consequently, organisations prioritise governance over technical compliance, elevating the role of the Chief AI Ethics Officer.

### The argument for a Chief AI Ethics Officer

A CAIEO role was developed due to three pressures:

1. Governments are proposing new laws to safeguard against unethical AI. The EU's AI Act enforces strict oversight and risk classification for AI systems. The Biden administration's "Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights" demands transparency, fairness, and human alternatives to AI decisions.
2. Ethical AI affects how customers perceive companies. Trust can quickly erode when hiring or face recognition systems are seen as biased. A CAIEO guides decisions to

protect the brand's image.

3. Accountability to Stakeholders: Employees, investors, and customers now expect companies to be more accountable. Unethical actions can lead to employee turnover, shareholder demands for change, and customer avoidance. Leading in ethics signifies commitment to corporate responsibility.

EY's 2024 Future of Trust study shows that firms with a dedicated AI ethics function achieve up to 25% higher stakeholder trust scores.

### What Duties Could a Chief AI Ethics Officer Handle?

CAIEOs must fulfil duties beyond mere compliance or advice. Engineering requires detailed planning, encompasses various topics, and involves significant teamwork. Typical roles include:

**Policy Creation:** Developing and enforcing AI ethics policies that align with legal and moral standards.

**Overseeing Functions:** Working with legal, product, engineering, HR, and marketing teams to ensure ethical aspects are integrated into company offerings.

**Risk Evaluation:** Assessing the risks of AI applications to identify critical areas and ensuring appropriate defences are in place.

**Training Programmes:** Establishing and leading ethics training for all staff.

**Mediation:** Connecting the business with regulators, academic institutions, and civil organisations.

The CAIEO should be able to work with technology, ethics, policy and issues related to organisations.

### Issues and Things to Consider

Although the case appears clear, setting up a CAIEO can be difficult in some ways:

It is important that the role wields authority and is represented in meetings, not just used to represent the company publicly.

Most organisations currently have people in the positions of Chief Data Officers (CDOs), Chief Risk Officers (CROs) or Chief Compliance Officers (CCOs). Determining what the study will include and which questions are unnecessary is very important.

Finding experts who can handle difficult technologies while acting ethically is not easy. KPMG found that less than 5% of AI-related jobs focus on ethical matters, meaning insufficient attention is given to developing ethical talent.

### Global Momentum

Despite barriers, progress is evident. Salesforce, Microsoft, and IBM have begun appointing ethical leaders with legal, technological, and philosophical expertise. Pharma Nexus' 2025 AI in Life Sciences report notes that 78% of life sciences leaders believe ethical oversight should be the board's responsibility.

Additionally, Harvard Business Review indicates that strong ethics can enhance innovation and support

competitive success.

### Would Appointing One Improve a Company's Performance?

Not necessarily. The decision to construct a CAIEO relies on several considerations.

**Heavy Rely on AI:** Businesses that depend mostly on AI for their daily duties or customer engagement are excellent opportunities.

Companies in industries covered by extensive regulations (healthcare, finance, public services) must be extra accountable.

A good reputation can be vital for firms that deal directly with clients, so ethical oversight matters more to them.

Even if they are not large, organisations can help by assigning the task of overseeing AI ethics to senior staff or at least to a special officer.

### Developments in Corporate Ethics Leadership

Ethics in leadership will increasingly differentiate companies as AI transforms industries. When ethical practices are core to operations and leadership exemplifies this, companies manage oversight effectively, embrace innovation, and gain public trust.

Even with machines influencing decisions, individuals must depend on their moral compass. A CAIEO and a systematic approach to ethics require AI accountability at the highest levels.

Confusion regarding ethics in AI is now outdated. Is your business prepared to lead in the industry? ♦♦

10 Best  
**CEOs**  
in India 2025



*Democratising Wealth With Purposeful Leadership*

# PILLAI C SURESHBABU

CEO & Founder, csPILLAI

Some leaders move industries by force of will, while others quietly shape the frameworks that allow innovation to flourish. In today's rapidly evolving world of alternative investments and fintech, real progress belongs to those who build foundations that support the ambitions of many. These architects of change make the difference between fleeting trends and lasting impact.

Pillai C Sureshbabu, Founder and CEO of csPILLAI®, is one such architect. With a mind for engineering and a passion for empowering others, he has spent years designing systems that transform how investors and entrepreneurs succeed. As global finance navigates the complexities of AI-driven compliance and new-age investment opportunities, Sureshbabu's Broad Venture Builder (BVB) model transforms how alternative investments are structured. It turns startups, scaleups, franchises, and mentored ventures into investable assets for retail investors (including first-time investors, small-town participants, and HNIs), while also allowing angels, venture capitalists, and incubators to invest through defined platforms with structured exits and investor-first protections.

At the heart of Sureshbabu's journey is a commitment to making opportunity accessible and sustainable—whether for institutional investors or rural founders. His approach is rooted in clarity, collaboration, and a genuine belief in shared success. In this exclusive



interview, he reflects on his early lessons, the challenges of building from scratch, and his future for alternative investing.

## Q What kept you up at night before you created the Broad Venture Builder (BVB) model?

You know, the question that wouldn't let me sleep was simple but powerful: Why are India's retail and HNI investors from smaller towns always left out of high-growth opportunities? I saw eager investors ready to participate, but the system gave them no real access or protection. Meanwhile, startups were desperate for smart, patient capital.

It struck me that India didn't need just another incubator—it needed a new architecture, one that could connect capital with innovation and offer real security. That's what sparked the Broad Venture Builder (BVB) model. With BVB, we don't just launch ventures; we open the door for everyday investors to truly participate, protect their interests, and share in the prosperity they help create.

## Q In a world chasing unicorns, what does “institutionalising prosperity” mean to you?

I've always believed that true progress isn't about who gets ahead but how many join the journey. Too often, wealth is just a lucky break for a few, tied to the right networks or chance. I wanted to replace luck with logic—so even first-time investors or families from smaller cities have structured ways to participate, with real protections and planned exits. With csPILLAI® and the BVB model, prosperity isn't just aspirational; it's something anyone can reach, thanks to safeguards and transparency built into the system. That's how prosperity moves from wishful thinking to something we can all count on.

## Q How do you decide when numbers and intuition disagree?

I've learned that numbers show where you've been, but intuition hints at where you could go next. I always start with the data—it grounds the decision. But when numbers and gut feel clash, I pause and ask: does this choice align with our core purpose—advancing innovation, creating jobs, and supporting entrepreneurs through the BVB model?

If intuition pushes us closer to that mission, I trust it, but never at the expense of discipline

or investor protection. For me, intuition isn't a shortcut—it's a compass, guiding strategy when the future isn't yet written in numbers. If both purpose and protection align, I go forward with confidence.

## Q How can OCRPS and CCPS make capital more accessible in rural India?

Democratising capital starts with turning OCRPS and CCPS from complex legal tools into accessible financial pathways. The real shift happens when these instruments are explained in clear, investor-friendly language and supported with transparent onboarding, guidance, and structured exits. When rural investors see how they can participate, exit, and what protections they have, confidence spreads. Linking these tools to real ventures—like agro-startups and local manufacturing—makes capital flow where it's needed most. At csPILLAI®, we build trust through education, safeguards, and outcome-driven investments, making prosperity possible in every region.

## Q What truly refuels your spirit outside of work?

Honestly, while I find calm in silence and reflection, nothing lifts me more than seeing belief turn into real progress. Stories like Govardhana Rao from Gooty, who took his first investment step with us, or Swetha from Kurnool, who earned consistently from a franchise she never visited—these journeys inspire me deeply. When first-time investors return with trust and conviction, it reminds me why this mission matters. That quiet transformation, where ambition meets structure, is what truly refuels my spirit.

## Q What does “belief” mean to you now, after years of building systems?

Looking back, I realise belief has evolved from a feeling into a responsibility. Early on, it was driven by optimism and gut instinct. Now, it's about building structures that earn and protect trust, especially for those new to investing but full of hope. At csPILLAI®, belief isn't left to chance; it's embedded in every safeguard, every transparent process, and every planned exit we create. After all these years, belief isn't just where the journey starts—it's the result of systems that prove worthy of people's trust. ♦



# Solve Intelligence

Revolutionising Patent Drafting with AI

**S**olve Intelligence was started in June 2023 and operates in Delaware. It uses artificial intelligence (AI) to help transform intellectual property (IP). Solve Intelligence spots the challenges related to drafting patents and has introduced a new AI system to boost the efficiency of inventors and attorneys in making quality patents. The firm is developing new tech solutions for lawyers because of \$15.5 million in fresh funds and connections with Microsoft and Thomson Reuters.

## Founder on a Mission: Using AI to Transform the Patent Process

Solve Intelligence was founded by Chris Parsonson (CEO), Sanj Ahilan (Chief Research Officer), and Angus Parsonson (Chief Technology Officer). Their AI and technology expertise led to the company's launch. Chris and Sanj earned PhDs in machine learning from University College London and gained recognition at top AI conferences. Chris holds an MRes from Cambridge and an MEng from Imperial College London, with experience at The Alan Turing Institute, InstaDeep, and Dyson. Sanj worked at Magic Carpet AI

and Huawei Technologies after obtaining her MSci in Physics from the University of Cambridge. Angus has an MEng in computer science from the University of Bristol and experience as a Quantitative Developer at Coremont LLP.

Solve Intelligence tackles the significant time, money, and effort needed for patents, which typically take years and cost \$60,000–\$100,000, increasing with disputes. These challenges hinder development and delay market entry for inventors and businesses. The company uses innovative AI to reduce costs and enhance access to essential patent workflows like drafting, filing, prosecuting, and opposing patents.

## AI-Powered Patent Drafting with Security at Its Core

Solve Intelligence is renowned for its AI-embedded PatGenix™ editor, which aids in patent document creation similar to Google Docs. This platform allows users to draft comprehensive patent applications by referencing existing patents to highlight innovations and utilising specialised drafting tools. It enables lawyers to draft claims, respond to office actions, and manage IP assets efficiently. The AI adapts to each user's style, generating suitable outputs across various contexts, technologies, and clients.

Key features Include security and privacy through AES-

256 encryption and TLS 1.3, complying with SOC 2, GDPR, CCPA, and ISO 42001. User information is not repurposed in AI models, enabling lawyers to manage sensitive information with confidence. As a result, attorneys spend markedly less time drafting and more on client-impacting matters.

## Growth Without Hype: Solve Intelligence's Quiet Path to Profitability

In October 2023, Solve Intelligence secured \$3 million in a seed funding round led by Y Combinator, Amino Capital, General Advance, SAV, Translink Capital, and Nomad Capital. In April 2025, an additional \$12 million was added to the company's funding in a Series A round co-led by M12 (a Microsoft fund) and 20VC, bringing their total to \$15.5 million. The company's rapid growth is evident in its achievements; within two years, it attained profitability, and by the end of 2023, it announced recurring revenue in millions with a 25% month-on-month increase.

The startup's adoption is illustrated by 200 groups of intellectual property professionals in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, including Siemens, Avery Dennison, DLA Piper, and Finnegan, who utilise it. Remarkably, Solve Intelligence reaches clients without a sales or marketing team; instead, it relies on word of mouth.

## How Solve Intelligence Surpasses Competitors in Patent Tech

Solve Intelligence competes with friendly rivals, including

PatSnap, IPRally, HarveyAI, and Casetext, which was acquired by Thomson Reuters for £650 million earlier this year. Nevertheless, the company stands out because it employs generative AI for writing patents, provides custom solutions, and centres the user in its design. Instead of merely examining awarded patents from competitors, Solve's platform concentrates on the primary activities associated with patents that generate the majority of related expenses. Collaborating with investors like Microsoft and Thomson Reuters allows Atlassian to achieve enhanced growth and integration within companies.

## Proven Impact: Trusted by Leaders, Delivering Results

Solve Intelligence achieves outstanding results, as demonstrated by both client testimonials and the company's enhanced efficiency in handling tasks. Patent attorneys report that tasks which once took many hours can now be completed in just minutes, and some customers claim that using the platform generates comprehensive and effective claims from as little as three hours of recorded discussion. Being part of the 2024 Intel Ignite programme, overseen by Intel's Intellectual Property (IP) team, underscores the company's credibility, given Intel owns a substantial number of patents. It also participates in community events, such as hosting the AIPLA Spring Meeting in 2025, where it connects with significant figures from the industry.

## AT A GLANCE :

Founded: 2023

Founders: Chris Parsonson

Headquarters: London, United Kingdom & San Francisco, California, United States

Funding: \$15.5 million

Key Investors: \$3 million in seed funding in 2023 & \$12 million in Series A funding

## Building the Future of AI-Powered IP Solutions

With 12 employees on board, including AI researchers, software developers, and patent attorneys, Solve Intelligence is aiming for further growth. Legal, operations, sales, and engineering positions are available for those who wish to contribute to the company's expansion. As the global patent drafting market is projected to grow rapidly, Solve can capture a significant share by consistently introducing new tools. The company's responsiveness to customer feedback and ongoing advancements enable it to maintain its leading position in AI legal services.

## Solving Patents with AI: A Smarter Future for IP Management

Launched in 2023, Solve Intelligence is transforming the creation of patent applications by harnessing AI to boost speed, quality, and affordability. Powered by AI technology, funding, and expert insights, the platform tackles common IP industry issues, allowing patent professionals to concentrate on what matters most: inventions. As it grows and forms alliances, Solve Intelligence seeks to simplify intellectual property management, making it faster, more affordable, and more accessible to inventors and lawyers worldwide. ♦

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### Industry-leading certification.

We adhere to the highest security standards with SOC 2, GDPR, CCPA, and ISO 42001 certification.



Building a Humane Legal-Tech Future

# PRIYANKA SAXENA

Founding & Designated Partner,  
**Clinilegal Wellbeing Solution LLP**

Most people encounter the law at its harshest—during crises or conflicts—leaving many to see it as cold, complex, and out of reach. Priyanka Saxena is changing that narrative. Drawing from her experiences, she realised early on that the true power of law lies in its ability to uplift and protect, not intimidate.

Informed by experience across law, business, and systems thinking, Priyanka recognised a pattern: people weren't struggling to find lawyers—they were struggling to understand what their issues meant and what paths made sense. Clinilegal Wellbeing Solutions LLP was born from that insight—to make legal support as intuitive, relevant, and grounded as the lives it's meant to serve.

With a proactive 24/7 healthcare-legal support system, Priyanka is integrating law into daily life, focusing on prevention, empathy, and real-world solutions. In this conversation with TradeFlock, she shares how listening, innovation, and a people-first mindset redefine legal support for India's professionals.

**Q What inspired your shift from courtroom work to founding a legal-tech venture?**

The formative years in Chief Justice Late Shri R.C. Lahoti's chambers were transformative—

they taught me that law is fundamentally about listening, empathy, and serving society with integrity.

While those experiences grounded me in legal discipline, my real turning point came as I worked with people from all walks of



“Law is the unseen structure that supports our everyday lives—just like air, invisible but vital.”

life. I realised first hand while access to law may have improved but understanding how to act on it remains a challenge for many. That gap and the encouragement of mentors drove me to rethink legal support itself. Instead of replacing the courtroom, I wanted to complement it by building Clinilegal Wellbeing Solutions LLP—

**Q How did you manage a 75,000-advocate network without losing quality, and what did it teach you as a CEO?**

When we were building a 24x7 legal facilitation blueprint for India's transport and logistics ecosystem, I quickly realised that efficiency alone wouldn't be enough.

“Decentralisation, empathy in tech, and constant learning became my leadership anchors—because scale means nothing if people feel lost in it.”

Working with organisations that work with public organisations IRCTC taught me how to build resilient and humane systems. We created decentralised structures so accountability could live at every level, paired with intuitive tech that supported—not replaced—human judgment. Upskilling wasn't a phase; it was a mindset.

At Clinilegal, we don't manage professionals—we co-create with them. Whether it's 70 or 70,000, our focus is on building systems that scale without losing the soul of the service.

**Q What's your vision for integrated legal services, and how is Clinilegal bringing it to life?**

I envision a future where legal support is not just seamless but empathetic, preventive, and integrated into daily life. At Clinilegal, we're building a collaborative ecosystem where legal, financial, healthcare, and allied professionals work together. Our flagship

24x7 healthcare-legal operations—currently in development—embody this vision: enabling proactive legal support in high-risk, high-pressure environments, while we expand this integrated model across sectors.

**Q What gaps drove you to create a more holistic model of legal wellbeing?**

Despite tech advancements, legal services often remain reactive and impersonal—clients treated as case numbers, not people. We founded Clinilegal to change that: by focusing on prevention, emotional intelligence, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Our 24/7 healthcare-legal operations (flagship service), now in development, aim to protect professionals proactively—before litigation arises. Cases like the RG Kar incident, rising attacks on doctors, increasing rate of wrong medical negligence cases on healthcare workers have deepened my commitment to early intervention, real-time support, and empathetic, hybrid legal service models. At Clinilegal, we're also committed to building a process-driven system enhancing efficiency without compromising the human insight legal work requires.

**Q How have startups, research, and policy work shaped your leadership style?**

Leading in uncertain spaces taught me what no textbook could—that real impact comes from listening closely and acting with intention. My work across diverse sectors grounded me in building legal solutions that respond to real-world needs, not just systems.

It shaped my leadership to be lean, empathetic, and decisive. I focus on building purposefully—ensuring that every solution we build still feels human, relevant, and easy to live with while staying open to learning and growth along the way.

**Q What's one legal myth you'd bust—and your crisis mantra?**

The biggest myth is that the law is only for emergencies or litigation. In truth, the unseen structure supports our everyday lives, like air, invisible but vital. My approach to crisis, I see it as a mirror to identify blind spots, learn, and evolve. ♦



# JUNE 17, 1824

## Bureau of Indian Affairs Established

On June 17, 1824, the War Department officially founded the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), forming a long-lasting connection between the federal government and the country's Native American tribes. The BIA started out managing American Indian affairs, yet it has been mainly involved in discussions of displacement, treaty-making, broken promises, and reform attempts.

Today, the BIA is part of the Department of the Interior, and its tasks have shifted from carrying out assimilation policies to consulting and promoting self-government, economic

development, and tribal rights. Its formation in 1824 established a federal framework that deeply impacted Native American people, rules, and property rights.

### America is Growing Businesses as it Moves West

At the start of the 19th century, the United States grew rapidly. The Louisiana Purchase (1803) nearly doubled its territory, while the concept of Manifest Destiny, the belief that Americans should expand across the continent, gained traction.

Settlers' encroachment into

Native lands posed numerous challenges for the federal government in managing tribal relations. These challenges involved trade rules, battles, land agreements, and treaty enforcement. Typically, military officers, state officials, or specially appointed diplomats handled relations between countries.

Secretary of War John C. Calhoun proposed a structured approach. On June 17, 1824, the Office of Indian Affairs was established under an administrative order (not by Congressional referral) to formally manage all federal relations with Native Americans.

### Birth of the Bureau of Indian Affairs

Initially, the BIA in the War Department emphasised control and paternalism. It implemented treaty agreements, organised trade licences, monitored agents, and mediated tribal conflicts.

However, railways primarily facilitated the removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands. In 1830, this culminated in the Indian Removal Act, supported by President Andrew Jackson, enabling the forced relocation of tribes west of the Mississippi River.

The BIA played a key role in this policy, notably organising the Trail of Tears, which led to the forced relocation of the Cherokee and other tribes. Many Native Americans perished from disease, exposure, and hunger during these arduous journeys.

By the mid-1800s, the BIA's role expanded to managing Indian reservations, distributing rations, enforcing federal laws in Indian Territory, and overseeing Native American education, often through Christian missionary schools intended to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-American culture.

### Working in Different Departments, Taking on Different Roles

That year, the Bureau of Indian Affairs moved from the War Department to the Department of the Interior, showing that the government wanted to handle Indian affairs civilly instead of militarily. However, this did not significantly change its policy decisions. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the BIA pushed assimilation by giving land (per the Dawes Act of 1887), etc., and suppressed Native American culture.

The BIA directed actions that split up communal land belonging to tribes, which led to millions of acres of Native land being lost and weakening their group unity.

### Changing and Advanced

The BIA's role in disenfranchising Indigenous groups was more widely criticised in the 20th century. The Indian Reorganisation Act of 1934, or the Wheeler-Howard Act, was an important policy change. It stopped the practice of allotment, returned some lands to Indigenous peoples, and helped them govern themselves.

The decade from the 1970s saw a push for more awareness of the BIA's difficult past. For example, the American Indian Movement (AIM) protested against government policies by demanding that treaties and tribal rights be respected. In 1972, protesters occupied the BIA headquarters in Washington, D.C., which created a nationwide stir over long-standing problems.

Because of various challenges, the BIA started to focus more on helping people and providing services like education, managing infrastructure, providing law enforcement and promoting economic growth. The 1975 act empowered tribes to construct and direct the programmes and services that affect their communities by allowing them to deal directly with the federal government.

### Shifting from Enforcement to Empowerment at the BIA.

Currently, the Bureau of Indian Affairs belongs to the U.S. Department of the Interior and supports the

government's connection with 574 federally recognised tribes, including over 2 million people.

Its tasks are:

Looking after tribal lands and the natural resources they contain

Overseeing programmes that enforce tribal law

Helping tribal courts operate smoothly

Arranging the building and construction of infrastructure

Keeping cultural traditions alive

Despite many changes, the BIA is still criticised for its low budgets, lengthy processes, and history of damaging trust due to past events. To Native Americans, the Bureau's impact is both negative, due to past government control, and positive, because it supports the growth of self-governance.

### A Legacy That Is Not Simple

The Bureau of Indian Affairs was formed on July 17, 1824, to become one of the nation's leading and longest-established government organisations. Instead of being dedicated to tribe relationships, the agency came to manage displacements, assimilate groups and later introduce reforms that strengthened tribes.

For the last two centuries, the BIA has been crucial, representing the past wrongs and the present fight for recognition, rights and fairness among Indigenous groups.

Studying how the United States came into being helps you know the story of the Indigenous groups who came before it. ♦



*Turning Corporate Goals into Human Impact*

# DR RAMESH V SASANUR

**Global Head and Executive Director (ESG, CSR Sustainability, Diversity and Inclusion), Bhoruka Group CEO, BHORUKA Welfare (Bhoruka group of Companies - Steel, Mining, Power, Gases, Tech park and infrastructure - India, Indonesia, Australia and Singapore**

As the global clock ticks louder on climate goals, ESG compliance, and ethical capitalism, most companies are racing to retrofit responsibility into their business models. But Dr. Ramesh V Sasanur is not like most CEOs.

While many leaders treat sustainability as a checkbox on corporate agendas, he has dedicated over two decades to embedding it into the very DNA of his organisation, transforming it from a boardroom buzzword into a guiding business principle.

Today, he serves as the Global Head and Executive Director of ESG, CSR, Sustainability, Diversity, and Inclusion, as well as the CEO of BHORUKA Welfare. In this role, he leads with a blueprint that merges profit with purpose, scale with sensitivity, and growth with grounded impact.

His journey, shaped by leadership roles at Oxfam India, MYRADA, World Bank and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency-supported projects, and Avantha Group, Global Green one of the renowned Business Conglomerates in India and Vicat SA (Bharti Cement) is a French company manufacturing cement France and India has taken him across sectors and geographies.

At BHORUKA Group, which operates across power, steel, mining, and tech parks, Dr. Sasanur institutionalised ESG practices well before regulations demanded it. He has aligned the company's strategy with global frameworks, including the GRI and IFC standards, while also promoting diversity, ethical governance, and tangible impact in the real world.

In a special conversation with TradeFlock, Dr. Ramesh V Sasanur shares his vision, reflects on the challenges of building a values-first corporate culture, and explains why true leadership is measured not by quarterly returns but by generational impact.

## What does ethical profitability mean to you?

I've always believed that business should be as much about impact as it is about income. For me, ethical profitability is the sweet spot where purpose and performance intersect. It's about striking a balance between financial success and social responsibility, where every decision is guided not just by profit margins, but by principles. Over the years, I've seen how prioritising ethics builds more than just numbers;

**"By prioritising ethics, we build a strong brand reputation, drive customer loyalty, and ensure sustainable growth."**

it builds reputation, trust, and loyalty.

That mindset doesn't just feel right—it pays off in the long run. It adds real, lasting value to your brand, your products, and ultimately, your bottom line.

## How do you bring empathy into sustainability strategies across countries?

Empathy is the thread that ties our strategy together, no matter the geography. We don't believe in one-size-fits-all. Whether it's India, Indonesia, Australia, or Singapore, we listen first, understanding local needs, cultures, and challenges before designing any sustainability programme. It's about showing up with respect and curiosity, not assumptions. That's how we build trust, create meaningful community impact, and deliver solutions that last.

## What's your leadership mantra for driving change in profit-focused companies?

I've always seen leadership as the art of realignment—bringing purpose and profit onto the same path. In traditionally profit-driven spaces, my mantra is to anchor business goals in social and environmental responsibility. I believe the most impactful strategies are those that consider people, planet, and profit together. By integrating social and environmental considerations into business priorities, we can create a sustainable, long-term impact. It's not just about launching initiatives—it's about

nurturing them until they reshape culture. What excites me is seeing this shift become more than a trend. Today, systemic change is possible because more leaders are realising that sustainability isn't a choice—it's the smartest business strategy we have.

## What was your toughest stakeholder alignment issue—and how did you turn it around?

Starting my journey at the grassroots taught me one thing early on—every stakeholder sees the world differently. In projects with the World Bank, NABARD, or SIDA, the toughest part was never the paperwork—it was aligning those diverse perspectives. But over time, I learned that every assignment demands a tailored approach, not just a plan. That belief helped me turn complexity into collaboration every single time.

## What's something outside work that fuels your leadership energy or CSR thinking?

I get my best ideas away from the desk. Whether it's diving into a good book, hitting the field for a game, or reflecting on life's deeper questions, these moments recharge me. I also love connecting with peers—those conversations often spark fresh thinking. Stepping back helps me return with sharper ideas and a clearer purpose. It's in that balance of mind, body, and spirit that new perspectives and impactful CSR ideas start to form.

## What does success mean to you today?

These days, success feels less like a trophy and more like a ripple. It's about seeing our work spark real change and knowing that stakeholders and communities are genuinely part of that journey. ♦

**"Success is also defined by community collaboration and their active participation in our journey. When impact is shared, and satisfaction runs deep—that's when I know we've truly succeeded."**



# RADICAL TRANSPARENCY

How Smart CEOs Are Turning Vulnerability into Strategy

Now that being real and honest is so important, radical transparency is helping build the foundation of effective modern leadership. Many CEOs use openness, vulnerability, and direct feedback to foster trust among team members, bring teams together, and respond to change faster. Leaders are changing the historical decision-making method by including self-correction, clear books available to all and instant feedback. But is it a good idea to trust publicly in radical transparency?

## What Makes Radical Transparency Philosophically Significant

With radically transparent

organisations, employees can view open documents, and conversations are structured to be honest and useful. The idea is that having more information lets people make wiser choices. Being open about your errors, showing weak points, and listening to feedback are also part of leadership.

The approach is often associated with Ray Dalio, founder of Bridgewater Associates, who embedded radical transparency into the hedge fund's DNA. Dalio institutionalised open feedback and real-time evaluations through tools like the "dot collector," which allows employees, including senior executives, to rate each other in meetings.

## Making Yourself Vulnerable Is an Advantage

It used to be that CEOs were always required to show strong self-control, firm decision-making, and total command. Lately, the most successful leaders have chosen to show their weaknesses. Admitting their shortcomings and fixing their mistakes in public roles as examples helps them gain people's trust and shows that learning should never stop.

Looking at Satya Nadella at Microsoft is a good example. After being appointed, he recognised that the company's leadership had not done well before him, pledging to strengthen trust, learn from the setbacks and develop more empathy among people

working together. His openness helped reinvigorate Microsoft's culture and contributed to its remarkable turnaround.

Another compelling case is Patagonia's former CEO Rose Marcario, who often publicly shared internal decision-making challenges, including detailed reasoning behind controversial decisions like political activism. Rather than weakening the brand, these disclosures solidified Patagonia's identity and credibility.

## Open-Book Management: Giving Employees Access to the Financials

In radical transparency, open-book management means companies let employees see and analyse financial reports and operations. It simplifies business results and lets teams feel directly involved in the company's progress.

SRC Holdings and its director, Jack Stack, are highly recognised leaders in this field. As employees learned to read financial statements and were treated as owners, SRC achieved better employee involvement, decisions, and financial results.

Buffer, a software company, posts its employees' salaries, including CEOs' salaries, online for everyone to see. This helps organisations eliminate bias and inequality, fairly remunerate employees, and win trust from the public.

## Feedback loops that rapidly and widely affect everything

Transparency doesn't stop at sharing data. Truly radical feedback means leaders react positively to and use the feedback around them. It helps lower the ranks between

employees, making them feel more comfortable questioning authority without being penalised.

At Netflix, one of the co-founders, Reed Hastings, ensured that people could openly share their honest thoughts, which the team celebrated. Regular 360-degree reviews and the famous "keeper test" (asking managers if they would fight to keep an employee) hold everyone accountable, including top executives.

The Project Oxygen study at Google showed that psychological safety is the main reason high-performing teams succeed. Creating redundancies played a big role in making nuclear energy safe.

## Pros of Radical Transparency

Being transparent provides many more benefits for a company besides being seen as a good culture.

Building Trust: Honest and open leaders who discuss their successes and challenges are more trusted, which makes people feel connected to them.

Faster Alignment: Transparency speeds up alignment because everyone understands the 'why' behind decisions.

Because of open feedback, obstacles are revealed more quickly, and courses of action can be changed more quickly.

Keeping Stars: Millennials and Gen Z are keen on organisations showing their true side. Companies emphasising transparency are likelier to gain and hold on to people looking for meaningful work.

## Issues and Criticisms

Yes, radical transparency also has some dangers. Informing employees too much can

confuse or worry them if they do not understand the business environment. Criticising without acknowledging what is good can lead to less motivation among the team.

It also depends on cultural differences. In organisations where things are more formal or cautious, some people might see radical transparency as a sign of poor leadership.

A leader's decisions about what to release to the public must consider the law and the competition. Transparency doesn't mean full disclosure of all strategic plans or proprietary information.

## Effective Strategies: Best Practices

To achieve radical transparency, organisations need to dedicate resources.

Show teams ways to look at their data and feedback, and find solutions from them.

Reduce barriers so employees can feel safe expressing their opinions.

Example Setting: Leaders ought to be honest about their mistakes, allow feedback and make improvements.

Agree on the purpose, time, and ways data and messages are sent back and forth.

## The Evolution of Leadership

Radical transparency is becoming the standard because trust matters more as information becomes decentralised, and employees seek companies that act with integrity.

For smart CEOs, vulnerability is no longer a liability; it's a leadership asset. Open, self-aware, and inclusive individuals can adapt and succeed in any business environment with change and uncertainty. ♦



Cultivating trust, nurturing sustainable growth

# DR. SATBIR SINGH KADIAN

CEO,  
Haryana Water Resources Authority

In today's public governance, the role of a CEO extends far beyond administration—it requires strategic foresight, cross-sector integration, and the ability to drive large-scale transformation. This is especially true in regulatory institutions, where decisions impact millions and demand both technical expertise and visionary leadership.

Dr. Satbir Singh Kadian, CEO of the Haryana Water Resources Authority and Engineer-in-Chief of the Irrigation & Water Resources Department, Government of Haryana, embodies this shift. With a B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering from Thapar Institute and a Ph.D. in Functional ERP and Sustainability from IIT Delhi, he brings a rare, systems-level view rooted in data analytics, operational reform, and institutional accountability.

Over his 27-year career in public infrastructure, Dr. Kadian has gone beyond conventional mandates—introducing evidence-based regulations, engaging with national and international agencies, and aligning policy with on-ground execution. His work has shaped sustainable agriculture, rural planning, and industrial compliance across the state.

In this exclusive TradeFlock feature, Dr. Kadian reflects on his journey from technocrat to executive leader, the frameworks behind his reforms, and how Haryana is crafting a future-ready model for Integrated Water Resource Management.



**Q What's been your biggest challenge transitioning from Chief Engineer to CEO of the State Water Regulatory Authority?**

**"Water may seem abundant, but managing it responsibly is one of the greatest leadership challenges of our time."**

When I became CEO in 2021, the real task was shifting mindsets, not just solving technical issues. Haryana's water demand nearly doubles its natural supply, with agriculture consuming over 90% of freshwater—far above the global 70%. Our analysis revealed a 14 BCM shortfall, annual groundwater drops of nearly a metre, and 1 million acres waterlogged; 88 of 143 blocks were over-exploited. These urgent realities drove sweeping reforms.

"Agriculture was consuming over 90% of Haryana's freshwater—a figure that called for immediate strategic intervention."

Initiatives like Mera Pani, Meri Virasat and Direct Seeding of Rice promoted sustainable farming and reduced water-intensive crops. We also encouraged the reuse of treated wastewater in agriculture and construction. Integrated under the 2023–25 Action Plan, these efforts have already saved over 5.5 BCM of water.

Ultimately, effective water management is about more than policy—it demands community engagement, interdepartmental collaboration, and a true shift in collective mindset.

**Q Groundwater depletion is one of the most pressing environmental challenges today. How are you tackling this issue on the ground?**

At HWRA, our groundwater conservation strategy is both comprehensive and practical. In Panipat, we decommissioned over 250 textile industry borewells, shifting to canal-based water. In Gurugram, treated wastewater now supports construction, while similar initiatives are underway in Yamunanagar and Jhajjar through operational treatment plants. We strictly regulate new industrial groundwater extraction and promote Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) technology among existing enterprises. By combining regulation, reuse, and advanced technology, we're committed to preserving groundwater for future generations through coordinated, statewide action.

**Q With much of Haryana facing water shortages, what are your key focus areas?**

Our top priority is ensuring Haryana's water security by promoting sustainable river water use and maximising treated wastewater reuse, reducing reliance on depleting groundwater.

**"Access to clean water shouldn't be a privilege — it's a basic right we're working hard to guarantee."**

We're launching "Water Secure Haryana" by 2030 in partnership with the World Bank, a flagship initiative bringing over \$700 million in technical and financial support. Backed by strong state funding, the programme focuses on infrastructure upgrades, institutional reforms, and tech-driven water governance.

**Q What challenges do you face in gaining public support, and how are you addressing them?**

Public participation is vital for lasting water policy. Through the Atal Bhujal Yojana, we run large-scale awareness drives and grassroots Water Budgeting training across 36 Haryana blocks, empowering communities to create and execute their water security plans with departmental coordination.

The biggest hurdle is changing entrenched practices like flood irrigation—paddy uses up to 5,000 litres per kg, despite not being Haryana's staple. We promote crop diversification and ensure profitable alternatives. Success stories like Fazilpur Badli, now a 'Zero Paddy Village,' set a replicable example.

We're also reducing household water waste. In Panchkula, rejected RO water will soon be reused for gardening, car washing, and other non-potable needs.

**Q The Punjab-Haryana water dispute is back in the spotlight. What's your perspective, especially with Haryana supplying over 1,000 cusecs to Delhi?**

Water sharing is governed by established agreements and legal statutes. Haryana's rightful allocation from the eastern rivers—Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—is clearly defined. Since these rivers flow through Punjab, we believe Punjab is responsible for honouring these commitments.

"No state exists in isolation — water must be shared, not fought over."

Haryana, for its part, provides over 1,000 cusecs of water to Delhi from its own share, demonstrating the spirit of cooperation. Equitable distribution is a legal imperative and a constitutional responsibility that all states must uphold.

**Q What message would you share with future leaders?**

My message is simple: water conservation begins with each one of us. It's not solely the government's responsibility—it's a shared duty. Our ancestors safeguarded natural resources for our well-being; now, it is our moral obligation to preserve and enhance them for future generations. 🌱

# CRASH COURSE



## The Turbulent Truth Behind Boeing's Failures

On June 12, 2025, tragedy struck when Air India Flight AI 171, a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, crashed shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad, killing over 270 passengers and crew, along with some on the ground. While the investigation unfolds, early indicators point to a critical dual-engine failure, a dramatic mayday call, and possible system failures involving flaps or landing gear.

This disaster has reignited scrutiny of Boeing, a company once celebrated for aerospace safety and engineering excellence. There is growing evidence that, over the past decade, profit-driven decisions have sometimes overshadowed quality control.

### The Dreamliner's Troubled Past

Although hailed as revolutionary when introduced in 2011, the 787 Dreamliner

quickly faced issues. In 2013, lithium-ion battery fires led to a full grounding. The resolution required redesigns and raised early doubts about Boeing's rush to launch. More concerning, whistleblowers like John Barnett reported serious manufacturing lapses at Boeing's South Carolina plant, such as missing or defective parts, contaminated oxygen systems, metal shavings near avionics, and even undocumented defects. Many of his warnings were ignored, and the FAA found system-wide failures, such as faulty oxygen regulator components in some 787s.

These revelations painted a distressing picture of a company prioritising production speed over rigorous quality checks. Barnett's reports triggered FAA investigations and legal actions, but were often overshadowed by

Boeing's narratives pushing unblemished production milestones. Tragically, Barnett died by his own hand in 2024, a stark reminder of the personal toll linked to these unresolved safety concerns.

### The 737 MAX Debacle: A Crucible of Failure

Before echoes of modern incidents, Boeing's 737 MAX series triggered global shock with two fatal crashes in late 2018 and early 2019, ending 346 lives. The common denominator was MCAS—a flight control system malfunctioning due to faulty Angle-of-Attack sensors, pushing planes into unrecoverable dives. Subsequent investigations revealed Boeing's design shortcuts and muted pilot information about MCAS.

Moreover, insiders reported that Boeing had downplayed quality flags to

keep production lines moving. Gary Pierson, a former 737 manager, testified that Boeing resisted halting production weeks before the first crash and had delivered jets with serious mechanical faults. The FAA joined in finding Boeing's internal inspectors insufficiently empowered and possibly influenced by Boeing's interest. Internal communications showed a deeply dismissive and uncaring workplace culture toward potential safety issues. In the wake of the disasters, Boeing paid \$2.5 billion in fines, acknowledging liability yet avoiding the full weight of punitive damages.

### Red Flags Leading up to Ahmedabad

Although the 787 Dreamliner was not grounded in 2013, recurring concerns persisted. A 2023 FAA investigation uncovered improperly installed bulkheads in 737 MAXs, and incidents like Alaska Airlines deflating cabin doors highlighted recurring quality lapse issues. Whistleblowers like Sam Mohawk later spoke about missing parts and poor tracking under Boeing's watch.

Industry watchdogs and ex-engineers expressed alarm over Boeing's RNA culture, which is rooted more in cost-cutting than rigorous safety. Anonymous reports warned of failures in basic quality checks, inadequate speed at fixing defects, and degradation of regulatory oversight.

### The Ahmedabad Crash: A Harbinger?

What makes the Ahmedabad crash particularly sobering is its timing and nature:

The plane reportedly climbed

just 450 feet before crashing, suggesting critical engine thrust loss.

Footage reveals the "Ram Air Turbine" (RAT) activation, signalling severe loss of hydraulic/electrical power.

A final call of "Mayday... no power" echoes the desperation of instruments and systems failing in real time.

These signs hint at more than just pilot error or bird strike. Combined with Boeing's known engine and component issues history, they suggest possible deeper design or assembly failures.

### The Real Cost of Compromise

Each Airbus competitor took advantage of Boeing's missteps. With delays in the MAX grounding, clients diverted to Airbus, eroding Boeing's global market share. Rebuilding technical credibility costs far more than repair. Boeing's share price dipped nearly 5% following the Ahmedabad crash and related fleet inspections.

Public confidence matters. Families of victims from MAX crashes continue litigation. Trust in Boeing waned further with the Dreamliner fire and flight diversion just days before the Ahmedabad catastrophe. In the era of social media and citizen journalism, viral visuals—like the lone survivor calmly walking from flames—exert crushing reputational damage.

### Can Boeing Reclaim Its Standards?

Boeing asserts its commitment to overhaul its Safety Management Systems (SMS), aligning them with FAA rules. In 2023, it introduced SMS boards tasked with risk

tracking across design and manufacturing units. But industry experts caution that systems alone are insufficient without cultural change.

Independent FAA reviews, notably over Boeing's ODA (designated certification groups), flagged internal pressures undermining inspectors' independence. Reforming Boeing's internal culture toward true "just culture" reporting, non-retaliation, and transparency could prove even tougher than technical fixes.

### The Ahmedabad Wake-Up Call

The Air India crash may serve as a reset moment—not just for Boeing, but for regulators worldwide. The DGCA (India) has ordered urgent inspections of Boeing 787s; investigators from the US and UK are actively assisting. If Boeing's fate is to be decided in public probe halls, the company must go beyond compliance. It must earn trust.

The central question now: can Boeing reverse decades of system erosion, cultural slack, and corner-cutting reputational damage?

If they fail, their market dominance will continue to erode, lawsuits and regulatory fines will mount, and passengers may increasingly turn elsewhere. Boeing's decline isn't just technical; it's moral and institutional. ♦

# KHELO INDIA

## A New Playing Field for Indian Sports

As cricket has always been the main focus of sports in India, there is now a positive shift toward other sports. This is largely due to the 'Khelo India' initiative, which the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports introduced in 2018. The initiative aims to strengthen sports at the community level and help raise talent who are prepared to compete for the country globally.

After seven years, many wonder if Khelo India has caused a sustainable change in sports activities nationwide. The solution is both positive and detailed.

### National sports reform needs a broad framework.

Khelo India uses 12 different areas to support its mission: creating new sports facilities, finding promising athletes,

organising competitions at schools and colleges and encouraging native sports. It gives ₹ 6.28 lakh per year for eight years to recognised athletes, which helps them with their expenses.

This latest push highlights equality and backs para-athletes, female athletes and tribal sports to make Indian sports more democratic.

### The Infrastructure of Local Organisations

One of Khelo India's biggest achievements is building up grassroots infrastructure. In Delhi, the authorities have suggested setting up six Khelo India Centres that provide structured guidance for many talents. In these centres, people can expect to find modern tools, guidance from experts, and advice about healthy diets.

In Brahmapur, a public

school has introduced the Bhujanga Shetty Sports Lab, which was funded as part of the Khelo India scheme. With this initiative, schoolchildren will be introduced to sports science and physical fitness, which helps them develop athletic skills for life.

The school's headmaster believes that today's children are more interested and determined in sports careers. They are aware that their lives can move forward even after cricket.

### Indigenous Sports Receive a New Promising Future

Khelo India has shifted its focus to less commonly known traditional Indian sports like Mallakhamb, Kalaripayattu, and Thang-ta. After their popularity faded, these sports are now getting attention from the American public.

If you want to practise, consider joining a Mallakhamb class in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. Young athletes benefit from this old practice by receiving coaching and having the correct gear. Activities that were previously seen as just for a few are now supported and encouraged by both the public and politicians.

A Mallakhamb trainer states that Khelo India has made Indians proud of what they do. It's not just about preserving our culture; we are also escalating our performances nationally.

### Dreams Coming From Places Far From Cricket

More young people in urban areas are interested in sports beyond the usual options. Every day, skateboarders gather at Delhi's Deer Park for practice. While the sport isn't officially part of Khelo India's mainstream agenda, these athletes hope for recognition and infrastructure.

"We want a dedicated spot where we can skate," says Veer, who is 15 years old. "If we get help, our growth would improve a lot."

It tells us a lot about the young generation in India, making it clear that Khelo India should also consider introducing urban and alternative sports.

### Finding Talent and Helping Its Development

According to the latest records, the Khelo India Talent Development Scheme had more than 3,000 athletes involved in 2024. The system is designed to give athletes the chance to get coaching,

attend competitions, and gain experience in elite sports. But the actual challenge comes from supporting talents rather than just finding them.

Pullela Gopichand notes that many talented athletes have lost their opportunities due to a lack of solid support in the long run. Offering talent development programmes is not only a short-term goal; they must also last long-term.

Mary Kom, a boxer from the Olympics, also agrees, saying that people in their sport require mentoring, support, and career plans. Without management, the best people will not thrive.

While the scholarship provides a financial cushion, a more holistic ecosystem that includes psychological support, injury rehab, and nutrition planning is still needed.

### Understanding Visibility through National Competitions

The Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) and Khelo India University Games (KIUG), among other events, are significant for promoting relatively newer sports. They allow athletes to experience multi-sport events and even national telecast viewership, further fueling their ambition and adding value to their struggles.

"Participating in KIYG was like representing India in the world championship. That gave me the confidence to believe in myself," said young wrestler Anshu Malik.

These sporting events have become important avenues for sponsoring, scouting, and media activities focused on new talent.

### Issues Still Exist

These problems and others require working with private entities, investing in research, and adopting a more targeted and decentralised approach.

- Discrepancies exist with infrastructure equity in relation to urban and rural regions, and across states.

- There is an increase in female athlete participation, but societal challenges and a lack of women coaches remain obstacles.

- Disabled athletes frequently lack applicable infrastructure and reserved training resources and aids.

- New forms of youth sports such as e-sports, skateboarding, and parkour are currently not within the scope of Khelo India initiatives.

### A Promising Yet Incomplete Transformation

Undoubtedly, Khelo India has generated tremendous progress in the Indian sporting ecosystem. Sports have been integrated into the classroom curriculum, revived from obsolescence, junior athletes in small towns have been inspired, and dreams have been nurtured where none existed.

However, if the initiative is to truly transform how sports are viewed and played in India, it will require further diversification to encompass modern sporting trends, consistent patronage, and bridging access gaps in terms of region, gender, and disability.

Nurturing Indian sports talent should not only focus on winning medals but also on the number of children who view sports as a viable career option. Khelo India has made commendable strides in this regard, but the majority of this initiative lies ahead. ♦



*The Visionary Behind FirstCry's  
Baby-Care Empire*

## SUPAM MAHESHWARI

MD & CEO,  
First CRY

Before FirstCry became a household name for millions of Indian parents, Supam Maheshwari was just another father struggling to find quality baby products for his newborn. Frustrated by the limited choices and lack of reliable supply chains in smaller cities, he didn't just spot a gap in the market, he experienced it firsthand. That personal challenge became the seed for India's largest baby and kids' product retail brand. Now, FirstCry has become India's largest omnichannel platform selling baby, kids, and maternity products.

### A Beginner to Entrepreneur: Supam at the Early Stage

Supam was born in Delhi, and his education at Apeejay School led to a degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Delhi College of Engineering (1991-1995), and a postgraduate degree in management (PGDM) at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (1995-1997). After his MBA, he did not join a corporation, but along with Amitava Saha, he started a company, Brainvisa Technologies, in 2000. The online learning platform, which started as online test prep, has since pivoted to B2B learning solutions, and is now operational in India, the US, Europe, and Australia. During his ten years as CEO, Brainvisa became one of the leading e-learning firms in India, which was later sold to Indecomm Global in 2007 at approximately USD 25 million.

After the acquisition, he stayed in the Brainvisa until 2009 gaining corporate leadership experience and capital, which led to his next entrepreneurial move.

### How FirstCry was Born: A Frustrated Father Turns into an Opportunity for India

It was around the early 2000s when Supam, a new dad, travelled overseas and imported

high-quality baby products to his daughter. When he returned home he discovered that the market of childcare in India was disorganised, unstructured, and of poor quality and variety. This was the sore spot that led to the formation of FirstCry.

In 2010, he and Amitava Saha spent 2.5 cr of their own money to start BrainBees Solutions and launch FirstCry.com to fill the gap. They establish warehouses in major metros- Pune, Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata- to store premium brands and have a reliable delivery.

### Clicks to Bricks: How FirstCry Developed a Billion-Dollar Omnichannel Brand

By 2011, Supam had a GMV of 100 cr with its digital-first, inventory-based model. However, he understood that long-term success meant being in person. In this way, by 2011, FirstCry started to open stores in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities on a franchise basis, creating an omnichannel presence in India, which now has more than 1,000 stores.

He introduced his own brand of products- BabyHug (clothes) and CuteWalk (shoes) and started the FirstCry boxes where he gave free samples through collaboration with 6000+ hospitals. Not only did these efforts create brand loyalty as they exposed parents to new products but they were also intelligent marketing devices.

### Steering FirstCry: Supam on Culture, Innovation and Results

The history of Supam exemplifies courageous and disciplined leadership. A Forbes India interview noted his strategic shift to offline retailing due to expanding competition, particularly from Mahindra-owned Mom & Me + BabyOye, necessitating a refined go-to-market strategy.

As CEO, he has guided FirstCry's rapid expansion, with the company achieving 5,633 cr in revenue for FY23 (a 135% year-over-year increase), although net losses surged to 585 cr due to high marketing, depreciation, and ESOP expenses. He emphasised the need for a 482 cr marketing investment in FY24 to enhance the brand's digital and regional presence in new markets, anticipating operational leverage over time.

Supam sold 300 crore worth of shares in January 2024 ahead of its August IPO.

### Challenges and Solutions: The Way Supam Addressed a Dismal Market

Supam has addressed a number of challenges:

Disjointed supply chain: FirstCry established warehouses, own brands, and logistics company Xpressbees (which he also co-founded in 2012) to take care of quality and delivery efficiency.

Customer outreach: The availability of dual online/offline presence, loyalty boxes, and franchising introduced the convenience and trust to parent consumers.

Competition: It was able to outsmart the existing players in the market such as Mom & Me/BabyOye, with its scale and flexibility in marketing.

Funding & profitability: Supam was able to raise significant funds, even after incurring losses early on, due to its emphasis on scale, brand, and operational leverage: investors such as SoftBank (\$400 m in Series E), Temasek, SAIF, and IDG.

### Awards and Recognition

The leadership of Supam has gained a high-profile recognition:

Entrepreneur of the Year (March 2025), Forbes India, hailing his contribution to the establishment of the most prominent omnichannel children retailer in India.

Child Awards 2013, which declared FirstCry the most popular online site of parenting essentials.

### Constructing Purpose-Driven Businesses

Supam Maheshwari, an engineer and e-learning entrepreneur, leads a 22,000 cr baby-care empire, illustrating problem identification and customer-centric innovation. He recognised a lack of quality baby products in India and addressed it through supply chain mastery, clever marketing, own labels, acquisitions, and logistics integration.

This not only generated significant shareholder and social value but also changed how Indian parents shop for their children. In a competitive landscape with evolving consumer patterns, his leadership, willingness to take risks, and operational rigour ensure FirstCry's ongoing growth.

His narrative, rooted in personal parenting experiences and strategic vision, inspires entrepreneurs and leaders. As FirstCry expands into new geographies and verticals, Supam Maheshwari's story demonstrates how simple, customer-focused solutions can create transformative businesses. ♦

# DEEPPAKE DIPLOMACY

## Synthetic Misinformation Threatens Corporate Communication

In an era where trust is currency and reputation is an enterprise's most fragile asset, a new and insidious threat looms on the horizon: deepfake diplomacy. Although deepfakes mainly concern people in politics and social media, their use in business is now increasing startlingly. Fake CEO announcements, fake investor calls and impersonated voices in crisis messages make corporate communication more vulnerable and unreliable.

### Recognising the Threat Posed by Deepfakes

Deepfakes imitate audio, video, or text realistically. Initially seen as entertainment, this technology has evolved rapidly, producing content mimicking real

conversations. A 2024 World Economic Forum report highlighted a 250% increase in deepfake incidents targeting private businesses in the past year, with over 40% of Fortune 500 companies affected by misinformation.

Corporations face significant threats as they depend on public trust, markets react quickly to news, and digital communication is fast-paced. A viral fake video of a CEO delivering bad news or false earnings can lead to substantial losses, panic, and reputational damage.

### Real-World Cases

Cybercriminals used artificial intelligence to create a voice identical to the CEO of a UK-based energy firm, and they had the employee transfer funds in 2020. Deloitte and

KPMG have indicated that this case was one of the first about using deepfake audio to commit business fraud.

In 2023, an altered video clip was shared online that showed the CEO of a tech startup making harsh remarks about a rival company right before an IPO took place. Even though the video was eventually proven false, it cost companies a 15% drop in pre-IPO value. It made people realise a serious problem with deepfakes in financial settings.

### Impact on Trust and Market Stability

Synthetic media attacks are possible on investor calls, earnings reports, and corporate leaders' speeches. Businesses are particularly affected by how these

channels influence markets, so malicious companies want to use them to affect stock values, change M&A plans, or spy on companies.

McKinsey analysed that the financial loss to a listed company's market capitalisation because of a single deeply fake incident may range between \$50 million and \$300 million, depending on how quickly and accurately the incident is handled.

### Preparations by Companies

#### 1. Enhancing digital identity verification

Businesses increasingly use cryptographic techniques, blockchain, and digital signatures for official correspondence. Companies like Microsoft and Adobe are developing technology to help verify the background and edits of media resources.

#### 2. Identifying weaknesses and training personnel

Organisations are training top executives and communications teams in media literacy and deepfake recognition. EY's 2023 Trust Barometer showed that over 60% of CFOs and CMOs participate in cyber-communications preparedness drills, including simulated deepfake attacks.

#### 3. Real-time authentication systems.

Facial and voice recognition technologies are implemented during live broadcasts or investor meetings. These tools continuously confirm identity throughout transmissions, helping to prevent attackers from injecting altered content.

#### 4. Crisis response guidelines for synthetic media

Preparation is essential. Companies' emergency plans address deepfake-related cases and emphasise swift verification of media authenticity, reassuring the public and ensuring open communication. KPMG recommends appointing "digital truth officers" or integrating AI ethics experts into crisis response teams to maintain narrative control.

### Obstacles Related to Guidelines and Law

Even though people are more aware, legal rules are not moving as fast as technology. Many places have not decided whether producing or sharing deepfakes for satire or impersonation is illegal.

The European Union's proposed AI Act and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's recent AI-focused mandates suggest stricter controls are coming. Until then, corporate legal staff are dealing with various defamation, impersonation, and cybercrime laws related to deepfakes.

### AI and Its Role in the Defence Sector

Unfortunately, AI is responsible for the problem and also the solution. Cybersecurity software powered by artificial intelligence notices differences in audio or video files that are not easy for humans to spot. Some examples are monitoring eye movement, noticing changes in a person's voice, and recording background sounds.

Companies specialising in cybersecurity use AI to prevent malicious content

from reaching executives through emails and other online interactions. Certain tools work with Zoom or Microsoft Teams and instantly warn the platform owner about suspicious activities.

### Corporate Culture and How Open the Company Is

The company culture must grow to promote a clear and monitored information process. Managers should push teams to check and consider the truthfulness of information before sharing it, and let employees report suspicious messages. Making unedited transcripts of earnings calls available and keeping video recordings can stop the spread of untrue stories.

### Building Truth as a Core Business Strategy

Deepfake diplomacy affecting business life exists today, not just in the future. The more believable and available synthetic media becomes, the smaller the margin of error becomes and the higher the risks. Such companies are evolving their internal and external communication practices in addition to strong defences.

When people can't trust their eyes, having access to the truth becomes very valuable. Companies' leaders must see becoming ready for deepfakes as an important responsibility rather than just focusing on cybersecurity. Companies that do well in the new age act swiftly, honestly, and truthfully, which forms the core of their digital activities. ♦

*Cultivating Trust, Nurturing Sustainable Growth*

# TANVEER ALAM

**Director and Country Manager,  
SCL Commercial India Pvt Ltd.**

Trust isn't built overnight—it's earned in the quiet moments when leaders stand beside those they serve, sharing challenges and solutions alike. This principle has defined every step of Tanveer's journey as director and country manager at FertiGlobal (SCL Commercial India Pvt. Ltd.). Long before he led one of India's most dynamic agri-solutions companies, he was out in the fields, learning directly from the farmers whose resilience shapes the nation's backbone.

His journey started on the ground, understanding farmers' everyday realities. With significant experience at agrochemical giants like Rallis India and Dow AgroSciences, he developed a deep understanding of market needs. Rising from field-level responsibilities to strategic leadership roles, he continuously sought practical solutions directly impacting farmers' lives.

Now leading FertiGlobal India, he champions cutting-edge biostimulants and crop nutrition strategies. He focuses on empowering farmers with modern techniques that enhance productivity while safeguarding environmental resources. His approach emphasises innovation backed by trust, guiding farmers from traditional methods to sustainable, scientifically proven practices.

In an exclusive interview with TradeFlock, Tanveer openly discusses his inspiring journey, challenges faced during this

transition toward sustainability, and why he measures success beyond mere financial milestones.

## Q How has your journey been from the field to national leadership?

My journey began literally in the fields—I still remember stepping into my role at Dow Agrosciences, eager and curious. Working closely with farmers, understanding grassroots realities, and overcoming unexpected challenges taught me invaluable lessons.

*"I often remind myself that it's the challenges that build clarity and character."*

Today, as Country Manager at FertiGlobal, I'm grateful for those humble beginnings; they've truly shaped my path and who I am as a leader.

## Q What's the toughest challenge you face as Country Manager at FertiGlobal?

The toughest challenge has always been finding people who share our energy and vision. When I joined FertiGlobal, I was the only person driving this new venture in India. Although the company had a strong global legacy of over 200 years, bringing that legacy here meant recruiting more than just employees—we needed partners who could commit fully to our vision.

Overcoming this meant changing how we hire. Instead of just degrees, we focused on passion, dedication, and long-term thinking. I've learned "You build a great company by investing in people who are eager to grow themselves, not just the business." Today, we've grown from one to a strong team of 60, proving this strategy works.

## Q What key lessons have stayed with you through your transitions across different organisations?

Agriculture has taught me something important—behind every challenge lies an opportunity. Policies, climate, infrastructure—yes, these are tough hurdles. But through each role and region, I've learned that building lasting relationships, planning with a long-term vision, and choosing the right people can overcome nearly anything. I often remind my team that with the right mindset and strategy, every challenge becomes an opportunity. That's stayed true for me, everywhere I've been.

## Q With India's farmers shifting to crops needing less water, how does this affect your business?

This shift isn't just about crops—it signals farmers' openness to innovation and new technology. Farmers face enormous pressures: limited water, shrinking land, and the growing demand to feed India's rising population. They're now actively looking for smarter solutions. At FertiGlobal, we directly respond to this need, offering advanced technologies and practical education to help them get the best from their fields. I truly believe that when farmers grow, we grow too, which drives everything we do.

## Q What's been your toughest decision recently, and how did you handle it?

When I realised our strong B2B network across 18 states wasn't enough post-COVID, switching FertiGlobal to a direct-to-farmer (B2C) model became the hardest call I've recently made. It meant starting over from scratch—rebuilding connections, educating farmers directly, and managing new demand channels. But I believed deeply that bold decisions, backed by the right people, turn challenges into growth. Thankfully, with strategic planning and a dedicated team, that tough choice has paid off, helping us better meet farmers' evolving needs.

## Q How do you define good leadership, and what leadership trait are you working on improving?

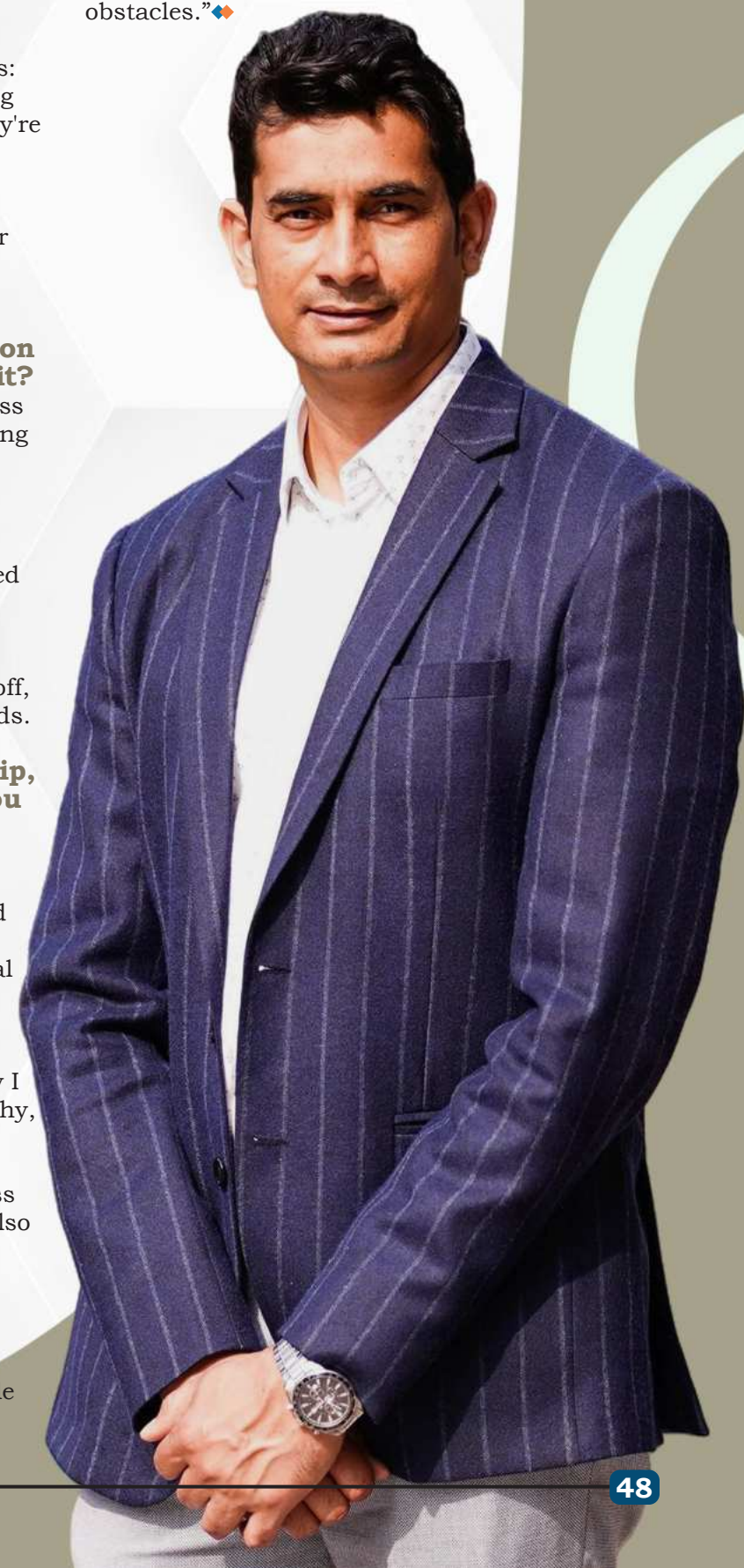
A great leader is much like the captain of a cricket team—someone who steps onto the field first, faces challenges with the team, and sets the tone through action. As someone who's grown from the ground up, I believe real leadership isn't just about holding a title; it's about understanding every layer of the game.

I've seen that "You can't lead from the top unless you've walked the ground." That's why I value hands-on experience—it teaches empathy, decision-making, and resilience. Today, I'm working on sharpening the balance between value-driven leadership and strategic business growth. Leading isn't just about vision—it's also about delivering results that last.

## Q How do you define success beyond financial performance?

"Success isn't just measured in profits—it's reflected in purpose, resilience, and the people who drive it. Financial growth is a result, not

the goal. True success is when a clear vision, the right team, and an unshakable mindset come together to move forward, no matter the obstacles." ♦





# THE METAPHYSICS OF LEADERSHIP

## What Ancient Wisdom Can Teach Modern CEOs

Many CEOs seek direction from time-honoured principles as business leaders during times of sudden change, big risks, and exhaustion. According to Stoicism, Zen Buddhism, and Vedanta, the practice of leadership is slowly but surely finding its way back into boardrooms. These beliefs offer comfort and practical advice for coping, focusing, and doing the right thing at work.

### Stoicism teaches us to have control over our emotions.

According to Stoic teachings, while everything is outside our control, we are able to control our feelings and behaviour. Therefore, this principle is extremely useful for CEOs managing through harsh economic, technological, or political times. Jeff Bezos and Jack Dorsey are among the leaders who have openly discussed Stoic ideas like negative visualisation and control. Such tools support leaders in staying calm, keeping their anxiety in check, and concentrating on what's ahead in crises. Regarding Meditations, Marcus Aurelius stated that your mind can be controlled, not events happening outside. Grasp this, and you will gain inner strength.

### Zen: Use Calmness and Full Attention.

In contrast, but also fitting together, Zen Buddhism highlights mindfulness, simplicity, and not being attached to things as a model of leading others. Following Zen, CEOs in decision-making processes are encouraged to delay their response, consider all options, and respond after careful thought rather than immediately.

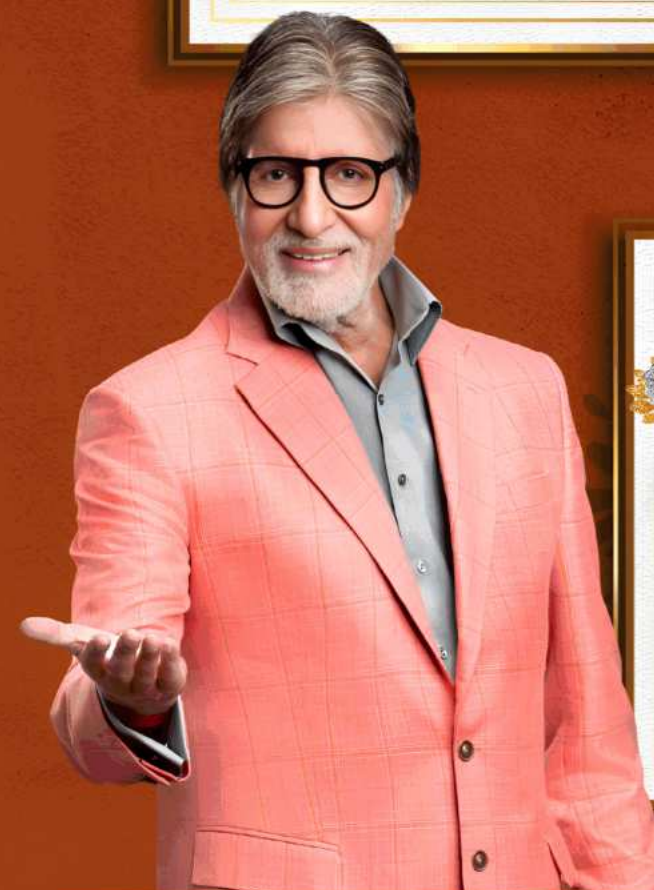
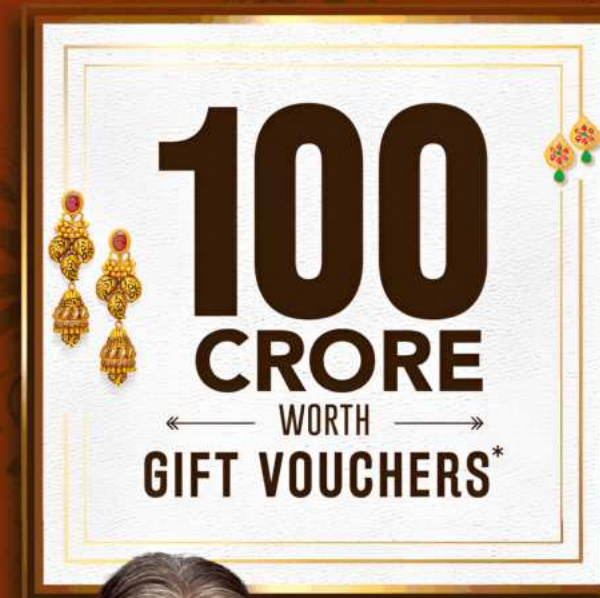
The idea of zanshin, or staying alert, makes strong sense in our hectic and easily distracted world. Both Steve Jobs and Ray Dalio reported that meditation and the practice of Zen strengthened their intuition and helped them sort through problems. Zen places importance on being present, which encourages people to be more emotionally intelligent, listen to others better, and become part of a more caring company culture.

### Vedanta: Content in my Natural State

In Vedanta, which is based on Indian philosophy, people explore the nature of their soul (Atman) and how it connects to the greater reality (Brahman). It drives leaders in organisations to focus on serving the company's purpose rather than their own gains. Vedantic thinking pushes CEOs to think about their role beyond their position in the company. Is my company making a positive difference besides increasing profits? It moves society from mostly transactional leadership towards more transformative results. Tata Group and similar institutions have used ethics, dharma (duty), and long-term vision from Vedantic thoughts to guide their business actions.

### Religious Traditions for Today's Problems

When organisations must address bigger and more advanced problems, good leadership based on wisdom and vision is essential. Instead of being just old ideas, Stoicism, Zen, and Vedanta provide useful techniques for leading in the 21st century. Adopting ancient ideas of metaphysics, present-day CEOs can use their wisdom to lead people and their strategies. ♦



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