

Asian Educator Magazine

July 2011

Chenraj Jain | EDUPRENEUR



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Chenraj Jain is the founder-chairman of JGI group. Headquartered in Bangalore, the JGI Group represents a cluster of 59 vibrant educational establishments. In 20 years, the group has grown big enough to serve over 30,000 students and has 3,120 staff members engaging K-12, undergraduate and postgraduate students across 25 campuses and centres of excellence.

James Paul

Roychand Chenraj Jain is a school dropout, but that didn't stop him from becoming one of the most successful edupreneurs in the country. Chenraj Jain is the founder-chairman of the JGI group.

"My family background is very humble; we never had any exposure. In our community education has never been on anyone's agenda. We could see that education system as a whole was as good as just mugging up and taking examinations. I saw people around me having a mechanical approach. So I chose sports as a medium to

prove myself, and while in Class 8 created a situation wherein I could come out of school", says Chenraj Jain.

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Early years

Starting his career in business at an early age gave him immense

experience to develop his potential and capabilities as an entrepreneur.

"I worked in a Bombay Dyeing showroom in Basavanagudi for six months. In the shop there were salesman with 10-15 years of experience, but they could not breakthrough to customers. My salary was just Rs 50 and the others were drawing up to Rs 600. My first sale, convincing a customer, was a delight to me. Later, in my uncle's textile shop, a person called Devaraj Ranka spotted me. He took me to Dhirubhai Ambani of Reliance Industries. And there I got a much-coveted distributorship," said Chenraj, as he recollected his early years in a candid talk with *Asian Educator*.

Optimism, positive thinking and hard work are his success mantras. He set his goals early in life and nothing stopped him thereafter. "I myself was enthusiastic; I used to inject that enthusiasm into others. From young to old, I used to spread the ideas. I have always had a one-point formula: mind-passion-energy-drive-will. I worked 18 hours a day and networked. I felt inferior, I saw many people around me feeling inferior. I made them realise that they weren't inferior and that they were better than their bosses. I used to invest time, sit down and convince people to start on their own. My mantra was: Sell your idea and make business friends. Create an enterprise for those who aren't confident."

He became a distributor at a very young age with a credit of Rs 3 lakhs.

"I sold goods which were lying unsold for two years in just two months. I went across to Tamil Nadu. I had my initial failures. I lost about Rs 1 lakh by selling to the wrong customers. But my agent and Dhirubhai Ambani were impressed with my initiative and spirit. He gave me more business instead of reprimanding me for the 'failure'."

Chenraj did a roaring business for ten years. He was responsible



As an Edupreneur

His community's backwardness in education prompted him to start education institutions.

In 1990 he started the Sri Bhagawan Mahaveer Jain College, the first educational establishment of the JGI Group

Swami Vivekananda's books inspired me. He said, knowledge is the future and it is important to make people stand on their own feet. I was feeling bad that my community wasn't educate enough. This was the inspiration for starting the Jain Institution. At the heart of the curriculum at Jain's schools are values imbibed from such greats as Swami Vivekananda, Dhirubh Ambani and NR Narayana Murthy -- all of whom have shaped my own thinking.

In 1986, I came completely out of my business. Thirty to 40 per cent of my profits went to rural people. I had even adopted 10 students in my school. I happened to read articles about vocational education in America. I attempted education

for 1,300 counters in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. This networking created more dealers for Reliance across South India. He used to handle unsold goods like damaged goods." Nobody

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wanted to touch raw, uncut material. They wanted to sell it at kilogram rate, but I would sell it at the market price. That created

a new wave. I was a trendsetter with all other textile units in the country. I used to spot talented people, convince them to setup their own shop and supply them Reliance products. I also used to put them onto others who would supply them goods. That is how I created my network of 1,000 entrepreneurs without any capital. I preferred 100 small customers to one big customer."

in 1990; I've never looked back since. My 12 years of experience helped me. By 1993, Jain College got recognized. I used to come out with a lot of innovative, trendsetting activities. I gave them intellectual forums. I adopted the same concepts of networking, motivation and hard work that I had used in my business. My teachers are social entrepreneurs. I never sat in the office. I am always in touch with my students. That brought me more knowledge and insight into the minds of the young and what they want from life. If they wanted fun, you need to give them space. It's the same as what customers want.

We also started the Bhagawan Mahaveer Jain Hospital at Vasanth Nagar, Bangalore. It has now grown into a super-specialty hospital. If I had 90% failure and 10% success, even that success was like 100% to me.

"Education can help in nation building and this can happen only through human resource, not money. Human resource is wealth. Human potential and capital should remain with us. I help students identify their core abilities not only through a degree but also various value-added



programmes and by exposing them to various intellectual and talent forums. It is important to allow people to explore and discover their talents. I listen to their problems and see how I can bridge the gap. I am a facilitator. We give support and encouragement, not advice. I only follow networking; everything else will fall in place. With drive and determination one's goal and vision will become larger and better. You will also learn. Young people teach me now. My colleagues built my organisation. Being humble and positive are the ingredients that will help one succeed in life. You have to be optimistic and have that passion and objective to achieve the target. Misery starts when you have expectations. You should be detached."

His philosophy to motivate people is simple. "If you are complicated, you have a lot of dos and don'ts and you think you are brilliant; it's wrong. Nobody is an employee; they are all participants and contributors. Allow them to play multifaceted roles."

"Don't lose spirit. Unless you experience something you won't be able to come up with a better thought process. Be optimistic. Create an environment that is friendly as far as possible. Allow students the freedom of thought and expression. Reduce bureaucracy and facilitate interaction. As a leader, even you should learn. Respect each one's contribution and give people credit for what they have done."

People who inspired me

It starts from my house. My father was a very supportive person who gave me independence. He never tied me to any particular situation. My colleagues, corporate team and students support me. Dhirubhai Ambani was a great support. Very good case studies of Mahatma Gandhi, great speakers, thinkers, Indian culture, ethos and

philosophy, and people who have gone against all odds have all had an impact on me.

Concept of Education

Education is for life. You should synergize your expertise with networking. Businesses without human values will not sustain. They bring temporary happiness for those who want money. But if you want to have sustainable service, you need to give value to what you think and do. Ethics and transparency are very important. No business can fail if you keep changing and improving as per the need. Money isn't everything. Your people should benefit. Entrepreneurship is a great service to the society. It creates jobs and leads to economic development.

"You might have observed that even among Harvard-educated graduates, only 3 per cent have ever really succeeded in life. Management is managing people or society by identifying capabilities and learning while guiding others.

Dhirubhai

Ambani was a school dropout. All one needs is common sense, presence of mind, a vision and the will to work towards it. I am a school dropout, who has now become the chancellor of a

deemed university called Mahaveer Academy of Technology & Sciences, which has 14 institutions under it. Management is about understanding people and allowing them to express themselves by giving them autonomy to reach their targets. You don't require a doctorate to realise this basic philosophy of life.

Vision for the future

Ours is a multifarious, multifaceted organisation with 150 courses, 14,000 students and 15 institutions. Soon we will be opening our distance education programme all over the country. We have plans to open 100 schools and 100 pre-schools across the country within the next five years and 300 institutions in the next ten years. ♦

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