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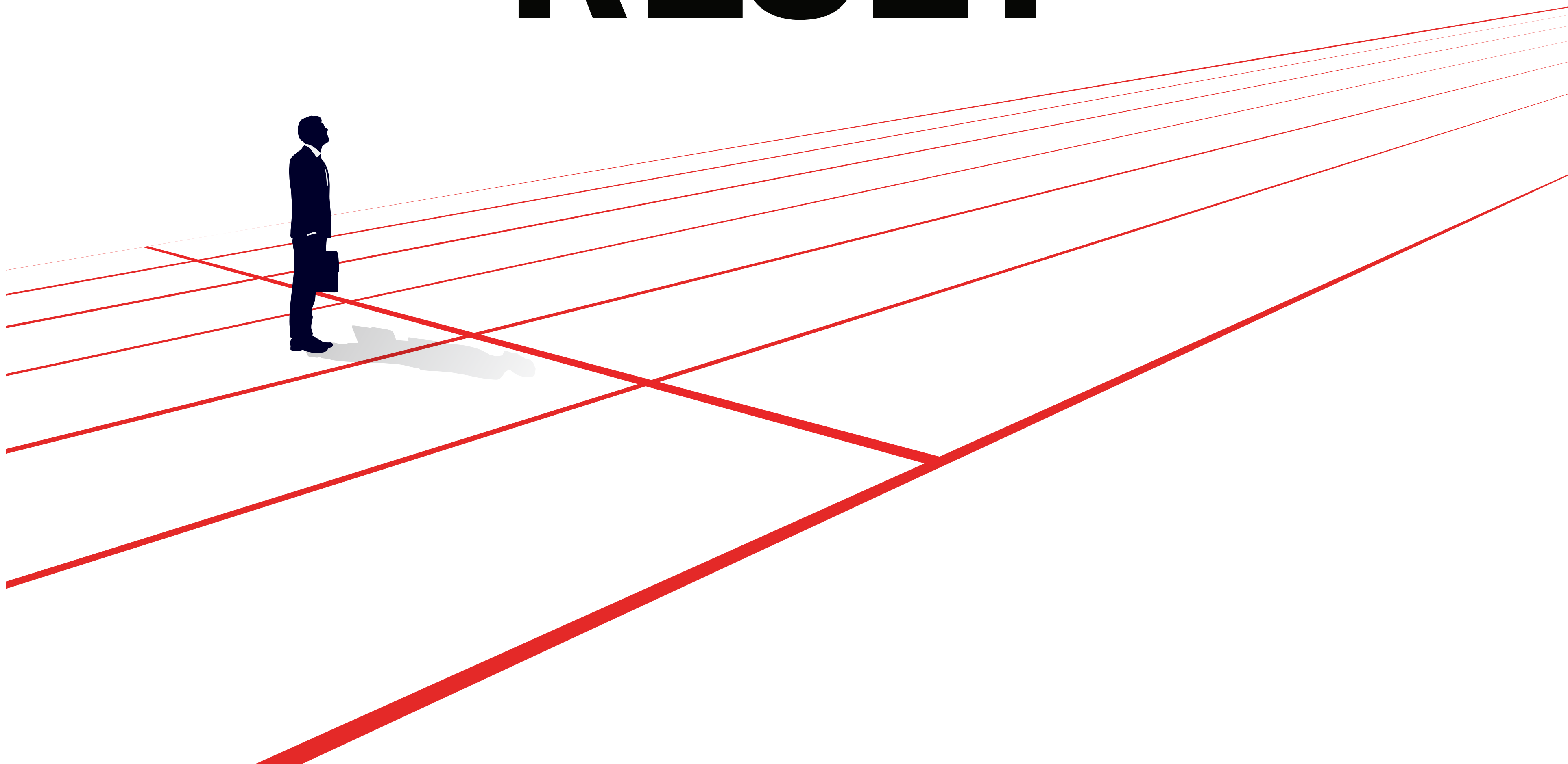
# THE LEADERSHIP RESET




CII – Suresh Neotia Centre of Excellence for Leadership

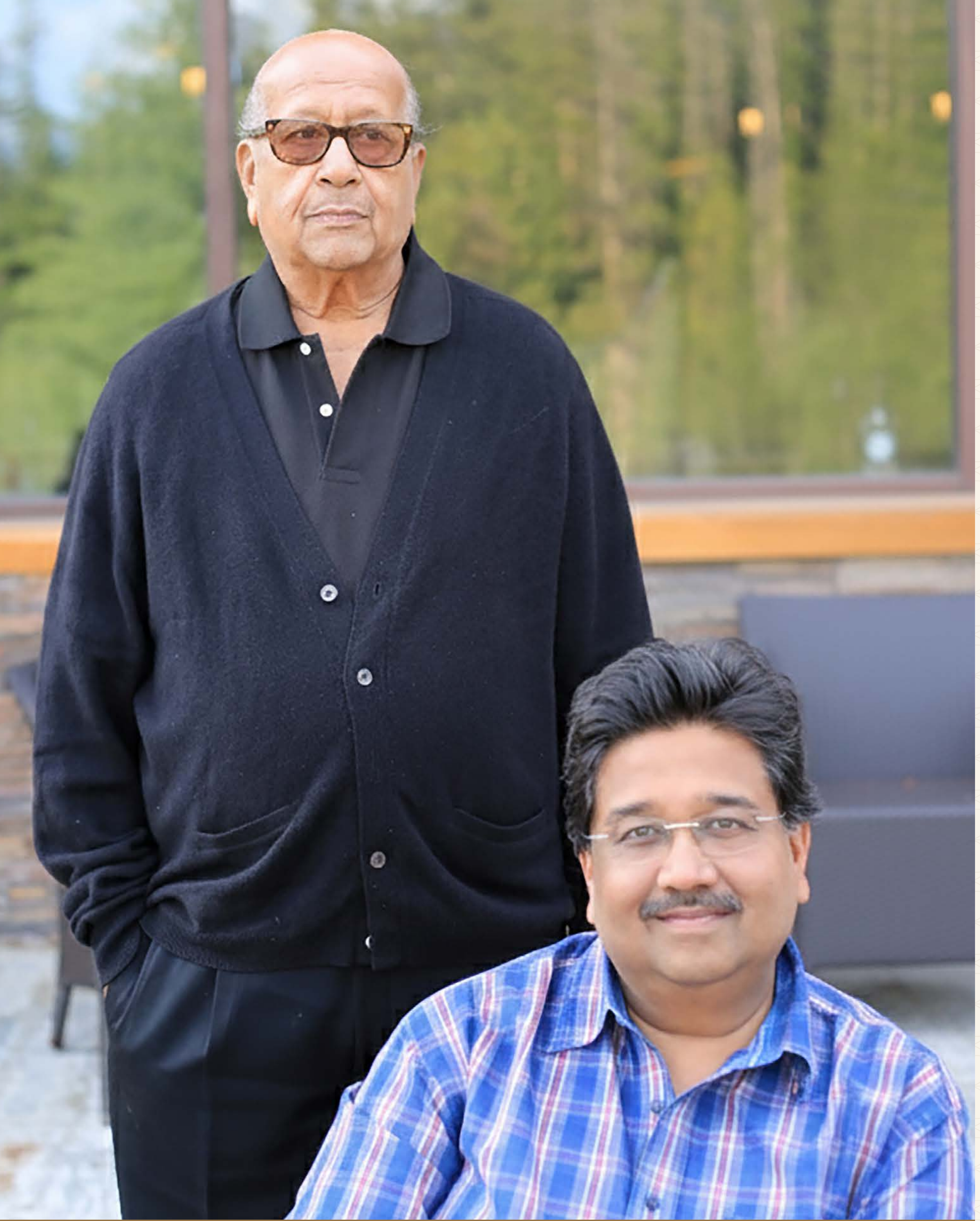
15 YEARS OF CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP

# The Leadership Reset

The CII- Suresh Neotia Centre of Excellence for Leadership (CII-SNCEL) celebrates 15 years of its journey in advancing leadership excellence and competitiveness across the Indian Industry. Established in 2009, the Centre has been a vital part of CII's integrated agenda of building competitiveness through its network of Centres of Excellence. Guided by the conviction that the quality of leadership determines the quality of growth, CII-SNCEL has consistently worked to nurture visionary, responsible, and future-ready leaders for India's evolving economic and social landscape.

Over the years, the Centre has built a distinctive portfolio of initiatives that combine thought leadership with practical impact - including long-duration certified learning journeys, immersive masterclasses, leadership dialogues, strategy sessions, and capacity-building platforms. Through these, it has engaged thousands of professionals, business leaders, and entrepreneurs in discovering new paradigms of leadership, innovation, and transformation.

As the Centre marks 15 years of meaningful engagement, it reaffirms its commitment to shaping the leadership narrative of tomorrow - one that is adaptive, inclusive, and deeply aligned with India's mission of sustainable and globally competitive growth.



Legacy of Leadership

## Suresh Neotia
## (1936-2015)

Suresh Kumar Neotia was a visionary industrialist and leader whose life embodied integrity, foresight, and human values. As Co-founder and Former Chairman of Ambuja Cements, he championed leadership that balanced business success with social responsibility. His enduring commitment to developing people and institutions is reflected in the CII–Suresh Neotia Centre of Excellence for Leadership, established in Kolkata to nurture leaders who lead with purpose, ethics, and a vision for a better India.

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# Foreword

**Chandrajit Banerjee**

Director General
Confederation of Indian Industry

## The Responsibility of Leadership: Building Trust, Purpose, and Progress

Geopolitical shifts, rapid technological advancements, and urgent climate imperatives are reshaping the landscape of Indian Industry and society at an unprecedented pace. In such a dynamic environment, leadership can no longer rely on authority alone—it must be grounded in responsibility, empathy, and purpose. True leaders empower people, create value, and leave a legacy of trust that strengthens institutions and communities.

A "leadership reset" is not just a response to change; it is a call to redefine how we lead, build, and contribute to a resilient future. Today, leadership demands courage as much as competence. Growth must be measured not only in financial terms, but also in the strength of our people, the inclusiveness of our actions, and the sustainability of our outcomes.

Indian Industry has a unique role in this transformation. As drivers of employment, innovation, and national progress, enterprises must lead with integrity, empower employees to thrive, nurture communities, and contribute to a developed and equitable nation. Our measure of success lies not just in market share, but in the positive impact we create for society.

CII-SNCEL is named after a leader who was so simple yet demonstrated every facet of leadership so strongly – Mr Suresh Neotia. The Centre forged partnerships between companies to produce the best leaders in the Indian Industry. This publication marks 15 years of the CII-Suresh Neotia Centre of Excellence for Leadership - a journey of learning, dialogue, and reflection. We sincerely thank the Industry leaders and experts who have shared their experiences and insights. Their contributions have enriched this collective knowledge and will inspire the next generation of leaders.

As India advances towards Viksit Bharat@2047, the task before us is clear: to lead responsibly, to be future-ready and people-centric, globally relevant yet nationally rooted. By redefining leadership today, we lay the foundation for an inclusive and sustainable future, ensuring prosperity and opportunity for all. 15 years have gone by, almost like it was yesterday, but let's continue to work together to build many leaders through the CII-Suresh Neotia Centre of Excellence for Leadership, with values from India.

# Feature Essays on Leadership

# The Leadership Reset: Navigating Multi-level Complexity by Revisiting Business Fundamentals

In Citadelle, a novel published 80 years ago, French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said it bluntly, “your task is not to foresee the future but to enable it”. This idea remains incredibly relevant today, as organisations face unprecedented levels of change and uncertainty. What capabilities should leaders hone? What should organisations focus on? What will tomorrow’s world look like? Following Saint-Exupéry, I suggest that rather than trying to predict what’s ahead, leaders should focus on “first principles” to prepare for the future.

**Individual level: Becoming better questioners**

Expertise never had a shorter shelf life. With Gen AI and digital technology reducing the value of information and making answers widely accessible, leaders must focus on effective enquiry and critical questioning. Good questions are key to informed decisions, yet leaders typically learn this skill informally and inefficiently – unlike other professions, such as doctors, lawyers, or journalists. Our work with my colleague Arnaud Chevallier distinguishes five types of questions—investigative, speculative, productive, interpretive, and subjective[1]. We estimate that today more than a third of Executives have a blindspot in their question mix (a type of question they are asking infrequently - without being aware of it), and about the same number (though not always the same) have an over-reliance on one question type. We urge leaders to regularly reflect on their questioning approach, so that they become better questioners.

**Firm-level: Reengaging Customers.**

Customer pull, along with R&D push, potentially drives innovation—if firms truly prioritise customer needs. Our research with Didier Bonnet and Katharina Lange finds that many companies neglect this growth engine when focusing on short-term profit, often falling into three traps: product-centric thinking, rigid organisational structures, and a zero-sum mindset[2]. In uncertain times, first principles call for firms to vigorously re-engage customers. We propose three ways to do so: constantly generating a flow of customer insights, smartly reconsidering the firm’s boundaries, and transparently searching for financial alignments. Two enablers are key to make this happen: the use of digital technology and specific leadership behaviors.

**Macro-level: Resetting Sustainability Strategy.**

Terms like “greenlash” and “sustainability fatigue” have become extraordinarily popular by 2025, following decades during which companies have been pursuing sustainability efforts. In response to this new situation, organisations now question whether to "fight," "flight," or "freeze". In our research with Goutam Challagalla, we suggest a different approach altogether[3]: "fix," which means returning to basic principles. Sustainability cannot be viewed by firms as a goal in itself. Rather, it should be considered as a tool that can enhance customer value and/or affordability. When sustainability is used this way, environmentally friendly products succeed, regardless of customer attitudes. As these sustainable offers capture more market share, firms thrive – and sustainability increases globally.

[1] Chevallier, Dalsace & Barsoux (2024): The Art of asking Smarter Questions, Harvard Business Review 102 (3) 2024
[2] Dalsace, Bonnet & Lange (2025): Customer-centricity : Digital and Leadership to the Rescue, Business Horizons (forthcoming)
[3] Dalsace & Challagalla (2024): How to Market Sustainable Products, Harvard Business Review 102 (4); Challagalla & Dalsace (forthcoming, 2026) Clean Winners: Sustainability Strategy that puts Customers first, Harvard Business School Publishing



“Sustainable leadership begins with rethinking at the macro-level. At an individual level, leaders should focus on becoming good questioners with a refined approach and re-engage customers with innovation & digital technology. Through the evaluation of this initial level thinking, I believe that organisations can drive resilient and lasting leadership and a flourishing future.”


## Prof. Frédéric Dalsace

Professor of Marketing and Strategy, IMD


Frédéric Dalsace is Professor of Marketing and Strategy. He focuses on two distinct areas: B2B issues such as customer centricity, buyer-seller relationships, and value management, as well as sustainability strategies, including inclusive business models.

He believes that companies need to rethink their approach to customer centricity. He says many organisations only consider customer centricity when they are defining their offers, but that they also need to incorporate it into the value delivery and value capture dimensions of their business models. One way of doing this is through risk-sharing business models including fully service-based offerings, such as Rolls Royce’s Power by the Hour model, or performance-based and outcome-based contracts in which payments depend on the value created, with the result that the interests of suppliers and customers are aligned.

Risk-sharing business models are also relevant in Prof Dalsace’s work on sustainability because they lead to more circular and more efficient solutions. He previously worked with 2006 Nobel prize winner Professor Muhammad Yunus on inclusive business models and is currently helping firms to integrate sustainability into their broader strategy by making the business case for sustainability.

At IMD, he is co-directing the Integrating Sustainability into Strategy program. Dalsace has been working with IMD’s Professor of Strategy and Marketing, Goutam Challagalla on this topic for several years. Their research will be showcased in their upcoming book on firms’ sustainability strategies, “Clean Winners: sustainability strategy that puts customers first”, which is scheduled for publication in 2025. In addition, he is also collaborating with IMD’s Professor of Strategy Arnaud Chevallier on a project to identify and evaluate the types of questions that leaders should be asking of those around them. As this is not something that is formally taught, leaders tend to learn by doing, which can lead to blind spots. Using a database of more than 600 executives, the pair have therefore developed a template for the types of questions that leaders need to ask – and how to ask them.

He has worked with a range of firms including Atlas Copco, Valmet, VAT Group, Grundfos, MANE, Porsche, and STADA, and he has been published in academic journals such as Harvard Business Review, Business Horizons, Strategic Management Journal, and Revue Française de Gestion.

Before joining IMD in 2019 he was a Professor at HEC Paris for 16 years, holding the Social Business/Enterprise and Poverty Chair, and he has won numerous awards for his teaching, research, and publications.

Prior to his academic career, he held a series of senior positions in the business world, including marketing roles at Michelin, and CarnaudMetalbox and as a strategy consultant with McKinsey.

# Leadership Reset in a Constantly Evolving Era

In the past decade, leadership has been tested in ways we never anticipated—geopolitical disruption, the climate crisis, and technological change at a pace that renders what seemed cutting-edge just months ago suddenly obsolete. These weren't just operational disruptions. They were existential ones. And they forced a fundamental shift, a reset, in how we lead.

For me, the real reset has been in understanding how we approach technology and change itself. At Ki Mobility, we built India's first full-stack digital platform for the automotive aftermarket— bringing together independent retailers and garage owners who had been operating in silos, giving them access to diagnostics, inventory systems, technology solutions, and markets they couldn't reach on their own. But what's equally important is knowing when to let go. Solutions that worked brilliantly two years ago can become constraints today. The shift to electric vehicles, the adoption of AI-driven route optimisation, and warehouse automation each demands constant evaluation. What took five to ten years to reimagine now demands rethinking every few months.

This demands a particular kind of discipline. We must be willing to experiment with new capabilities and harness them quickly. But we cannot fall in love with any single solution. Every decision must be grounded in commercial logic, not fascination with novelty. I've learned to rely on a combination of data and intuition. The question is always: does this create value for our customers and stakeholders? That remains the ultimate test of whether our agility serves a purpose.

Building agility into an organisation isn't a solo exercise. It requires cultivating mindset and culture, bringing people along, ensuring they have the knowledge and confidence to navigate constant change. In a supply chain that is multivarious and layered, the true test of leadership is working with the smallest link. MSMEs in India and other emerging economies must be integrated into the same thought process. Understanding how they operate and how they will react to continuous changes (both geopolitical and technological) becomes imperative. We need to be not just prepared for surprises but proactively prepare them for these surprises through continuous engagement.

The leaders who will thrive are those who can hold this balance: driving rapid experimentation while staying anchored in commercial sense, adopting new technologies while remaining unattached to them, moving fast while bringing their organisations along. Agility is not chaos. It is disciplined responsiveness to what matters most - delivering value to all stakeholders in a world that will not wait.



"In this constantly evolving era, leadership reset must be driven by agility, purpose, and discipline. Leaders must be willing to experiment with new capabilities, harness them quickly, and foster continuous engagement. Agility is not chaos, it is disciplined responsiveness to deliver enduring value in a world that will not wait."

## R Dinesh

Executive Chairman
TVS Supply Chain Solutions Ltd

R Dinesh, a fourth–generation TVS family member, is a commerce graduate and an Associate Member of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and Institute of Cost & Works Accountants of India. He is the Executive Chairman of TVS Supply Chain Solutions and Director at TVS Mobility and Ki Mobility Solutions that operates the myTVS brand across India. He was President, CII for 2023–24 and chairs the CII Institute of Logistics. Through his position in CII, he played a pivotal role in getting the infrastructure status for the logistics sector. He is also the Chairman of the CII-FBN (Family Business Network) India Chapter Council, amongst other key CII councils.

Mr Dinesh has won many awards including 'Icon of the Year' from ICT Academy of Tamil Nadu for the year 2018, and 'Entrepreneur of the Year' award in the Services category from Ernst & Young in 2017. He is also the recipient of TiECON's 'Next Gen Entrepreneur of the Year 2014' award and 'Emerging Entrepreneur' award from CII in 2010. He started TVS Supply Chain Solutions (erstwhile TVS Logistics) in 1995.

Under his able leadership, it has grown multifold to become a billion–dollar company. It has a presence across continents, serving customers in over 50 countries, making it a truly global company.

TVS SCS employs around 18,000 workers across the globe. His other business Ki Mobility Solutions is the largest automotive aftermarket digital platform in India and offers integrated aftermarket services through online–to–offline (O–to–O) model.

He works closely with marquee investor names such as Exor International, and Mitsubishi Corporation, amongst others. Currently, the companies under his management have a turnover of around USD 2 billion and employ more than 25,000 people. He has been instrumental in expanding his companies' operations globally and has set up subsidiaries in Australia, Bangladesh, China, Germany, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

# Leading through Complexity with Constancy of Purpose, Clarity, and Compassion

In today's disruptive, volatile business climate, complexity is inevitable, and it is the responsibility of leaders who are steering the ship to develop approaches that clarify, energise, and empower people to find the best way forward through the fog of uncertainty.

Over the decades, three guiding principles have always steered our company across inflection points and challenges — Simplicity, Smarter Solutions, and Sustainability.

Embracing Simplicity brings alignment of purpose and action across large, diverse teams. If people can understand the vital few things that need to be done, then capital, time, and energy are channelled toward what truly creates value.

Seeking Smarter solutions requires nurturing an innovation mindset – the willingness and ability to harness data, modern technology, and human creativity to create new kinds of value for customers, continually.

Driving Sustainability, both environmental and operational, ensures that progress is enduring, inclusive, and regenerative. Growth must not only be profitable but purposeful — contributing positively to the world we live in.

The question, then, is how leaders can embed these principles in the hearts and minds of their people. I learned this early on in my career.

Every time my father and I took a tour of our factories, he would stop and ask the shopfloor employees, "Aaje navu su kidhu?", Gujarati for 'Have you done anything new today?' That simple question, asked consistently, nurtured a culture of curiosity, improvement, and innovation. But, more importantly, it established a constancy of purpose that is crucial for the enduring success of organisations.

Leaders must ensure that an organisation stays true to its purpose even when presented with choices or opportunities that could easily distract it from the same.

This kind of approach also brings clarity of purpose and action, in a simple, relatable way, to the work of every employee: Try something new, something different, every day, fearlessly, so that we can remain relevant to our customers in an ever-changing world.

Where there is clarity of what to do, there is focus; where there is focus, there is efficiency and effectiveness. Results will follow naturally.

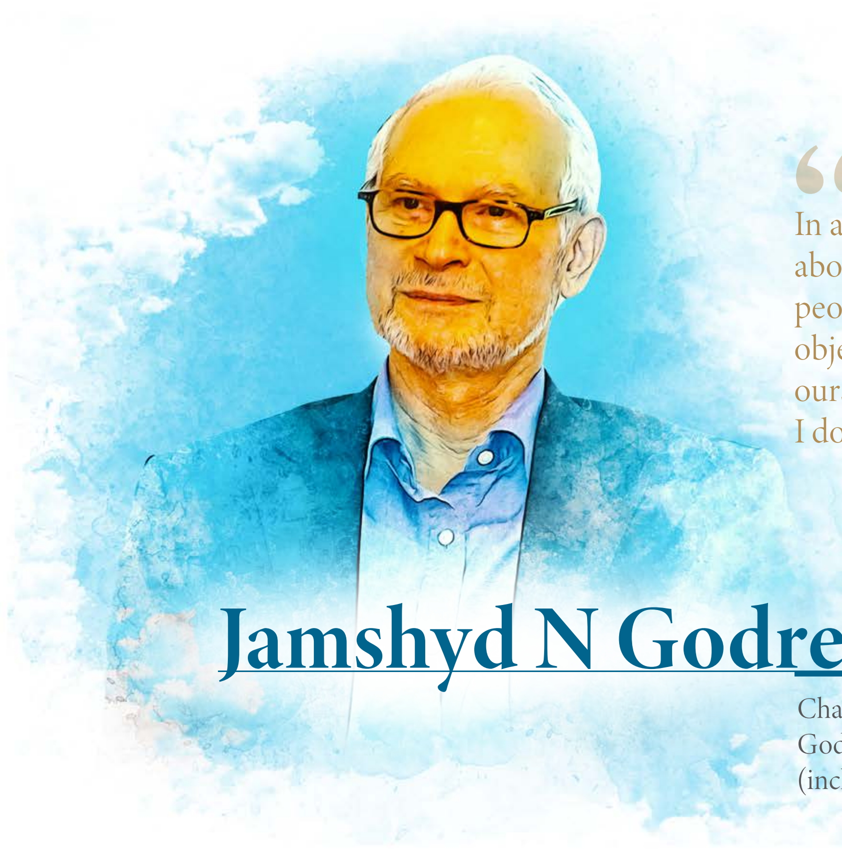
Finally, leadership demands empathy and compassion, especially in volatile times when people experience stress that can spill over into their personal lives.

True leaders pause to understand why someone may be struggling, suspend judgment, and offer support rather than solutions.

To sum up, in a complex world, the essential leadership reset is to help people succeed, both emotionally and objectively.

So, each morning, let us ask ourselves, "Who can I help today? And how will I do it?"





"In a complex and volatile world, leadership is about clarity, purpose, and compassion—help people succeed, both emotionally and objectively. So, each morning, let us ask ourselves, "Who can I help today? And how will I do it?""

## Jamshyd N Godrej

Chairman & Managing Director
Godrej Enterprises Group
(includes Godrej & Boyce and its affiliates)

Jamshyd N. Godrej is the Chairman and Managing Director of the Godrej Enterprises Group. He was appointed Director of Godrej & Boyce in 1974, Managing Director in 1990 and was elected Chairman in 2000. In recognition of his contributions to Indian industry and sustainability, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the President of India on April 3, 2003. He holds a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology, USA.

Beyond his leadership at Godrej & Boyce, Mr Godrej plays an active role in advancing sustainability, energy efficiency, and corporate governance. He serves as the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation, India Resources Trust, and the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW). He is a Director at the World Resources Institute (USA) and a Trustee of World Wide Fund for Nature – India and the Asia Society (USA). Additionally, he is a Board Member of the Centre for Asian Philanthropy and Society. He is the Past President of CII and also the Past President of the Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association.

Mr Godrej serves as the Chairman of the CII- Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre, CII-GBC Hyderabad. Under his leadership, the CII-GBC became India's first platinum rated green building and was recognized as the world's greenest building in 2003 and it stands as an IGBC-certified Net Zero Energy Building since 2019.

Under Mr Godrej's stewardship, Godrej & Boyce has grown into a diversified manufacturing and design led engineering conglomerate with presence across 5 continents and market leadership across its consumer and nation building businesses, which include aerospace, aviation, defence, motor solutions, energy solutions, locks & security, advanced engineering, real estate, intralogistics, consumer durables (refrigerator, washing machine, air conditioner, microwave), furniture, vending, and information technology.

Mr Godrej is an ardent yachting enthusiast and has done extensive cruising along the west coast of India, the Baltic & North Sea, the Atlantic Ocean and in the Mediterranean Sea.

# Leading with Vision: Building Legacies, Powering Growth

The Goenka family's business history spans more than 200 years. However, it was in July 2010 that RPG was carved out and RPSG was born. From a humble market capitalisation of ₹ 2500 crore, the Group has achieved a market capitalisation of ₹ 85,000 crore in the last 14 years. Our assets stand at ₹ 65,000 crore, revenues at ₹ 42,000 crore, and EBITA at ₹ 8000 crore. It has been a relentless focus on growth coupled with efficiency that has worked in this journey.

When we took over the power utility company CESC, the city of Kolkata used to witness 12-hour power cuts daily. Today, the restoration time is less than a minute for more than 3.5 million consumers. We are now focusing on renewable energy and are executing 3.2 gigawatts of hybrid, solar, and wind projects. Our target is to reach 10 gigawatts, positioning us as a major player in the green energy transition.

Our 100-year-old company, Saregama India, owns the largest repertoire of Indian film music. We enabled innovation at its core and gave birth to Saregama Carvaan, which packaged nostalgic melodies and achieved sales of one million units a year. We have continued to acquire leading new-age content platforms and have launched AI-driven training apps that aim to democratise music.

Around 12 years ago, we acquired Firstsource Solutions, a global business process services partner for less than ₹ 500 crores. Today, the company has a market capitalisation of more than ₹ 25,000 crores and an established presence in the US, the UK, India, Mexico, South Africa, Australia, and the Philippines. It acts as a trusted growth partner for leading global brands, including several Fortune 500 and FTSE 100 companies.

Our company, PCBL Chemical is India's largest carbon black manufacturer with a focus on performance materials and specialty chemicals, serving a diverse customer base in over 50 countries. Our recent acquisition of Aquapharm Chemicals and our joint venture with Kinaltek Pty and Nanovace Technologies enable us with a comprehensive specialty chemical and battery chemicals portfolio.

We also derive value and consistent performance from our sports vertical. Our iconic Mohun Bagan football club has been a champion a record 5 times in the Indian Super League. At RPSG, we strive for excellence and never give up. Growing legacies with consistent growth is at the core of our very being. Our IPL team, LSG, being a new team, is already gaining in popularity.



"A firm decision-making process and utilising the right approach at the right time define successful leadership. At RPSG, leadership and growth are reflected in a strong vision and commitment to excellence. From transforming a power utility company in Kolkata to establishing a global footprint, the RPSG group exemplifies purposeful leadership and a spirit to never give up."

## Dr Sanjiv Goenka

Chairman
RP Sanjiv Goenka Group

Dr Goenka was the youngest ever President of CII and also the youngest ever President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC). He is also former President of the All-India Management Association (AIMA).

Dr Goenka has served as the Chairman of the prestigious Board of Governors of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur (IIT-KGP) for a record four terms.

Under him, RPSG Group's Market capitalization has risen to ₹ 85,000 Crores from ₹ 4000 Crores in the last 12 years.

Dr Goenka has given employment to more than 55,000 people across India, Asia, US, and UK.

He has been instrumental in reshaping CESC and eliminating the power cuts in the last 35 years in Kolkata.

Under his leadership, PCBL became the largest in India and the $6^{th}$ largest company in the World in Carbon Black.

Dr Goenka made pure play BPO company FirstSource Solutions a leader in its space giving employment to more than 10,000 people in the US and UK.

Dr Goenka successfully metamorphosed 100-year-old music company Saregama with Carvaan and made it relevant to the current generation.

Dr Goenka has been part of the Forbes India's Richest list for more than a decade; he regularly features in the top 25 philanthropists in the Hurun Philanthropy list and has been nominated a record 7 times in the India Today 50 Most Powerful people list in the country.

Dr Goenka has provided a luxury Mall Quest, state-of-the-art Woodlands hospital and an International School RPGIS to the city of Kolkata.

Under his leadership, the iconic football club Mohun Bagan Super Giant won the ISL Champions trophy 5 times.

Dr Goenka is passionate about cricket and owns the IP L team Lucknow Super Giants , the SA20 team in South Africa called Durban Super Giants and the UK based cricket team Manchester Originals.

# Resilience and Renewal: The True Test of Leadership

The 2000s were not all smooth sailing for the Indian IT industry. It had to weather the storms of the dot-com bust early in the decade and the global financial crisis in the later years. However, Indian IT companies turned every crisis into an opportunity and continued to achieve growth.

The 2008 global financial crisis was triggered by speculative activity, fueled by the availability of cheap credit in global financial markets, particularly in US and Western European mortgage transactions. The crisis culminated in the collapse of the investment banking giant Lehman Brothers in September 2008, prompting the US government to bail out its banks. Like most large Indian IT services companies, including Infosys, it had a significant number of clients in the US and European financial services industries. We felt the immediate impact.

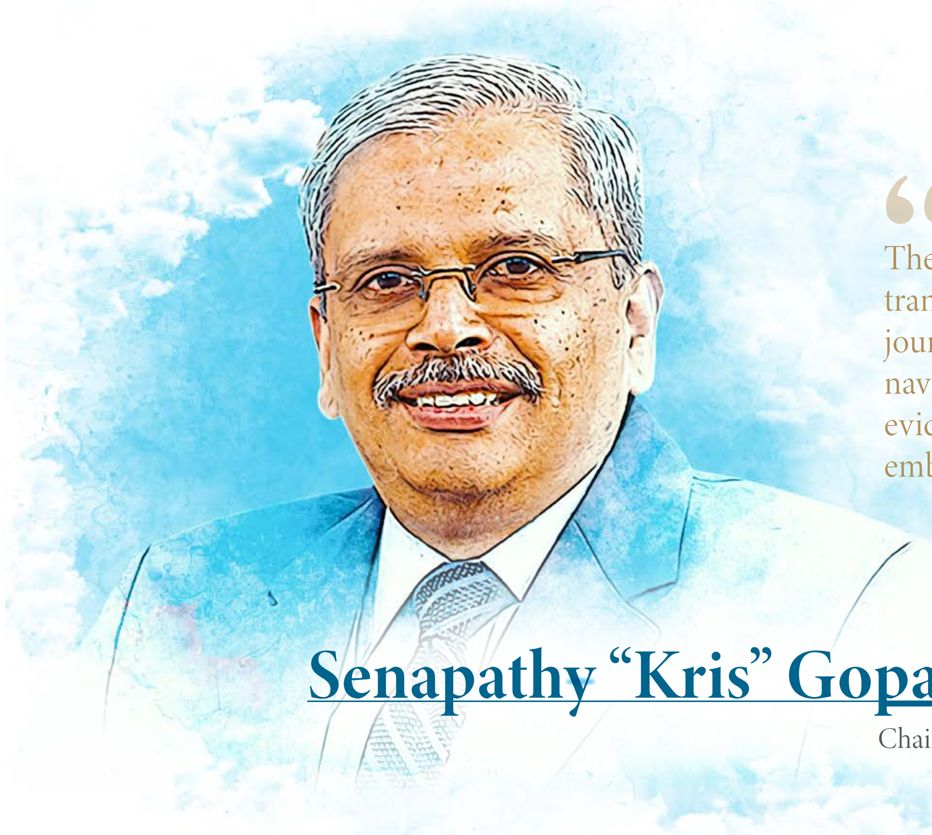
I took over as CEO of Infosys in late 2007. Everything was going well. We grew by about 35% in FY 2008. Suddenly, the world around us collapsed as the financial crisis hit. We faced decreasing revenues, and the next four years were probably the most difficult for Infosys, but we emerged stronger.

We made 25,000 job offers on Indian campuses and honored every one, onboarding new hires in staggered periods. This strengthened our brand with potential employees and on campuses. We also extended our training programme to six months and trained people on two technologies instead of one.

The 2008 global financial crisis prompted Infosys to increase its focus on differentiation and adding value for clients in an increasingly competitive global economy. We introduced new services, such as consulting, and focused on intellectual property (IP) creation.

For the leadership team, we delayed promotions and compensation increases. At the executive level, we took a salary of ₹1 to set an example. We ensured our best to shield junior-level Infoscions from disruptions caused by the 2008 global financial crisis. Our core values—Client Value, Leadership by Example, Integrity and Transparency, Fairness, and Excellence, ensured we emerged from this crisis a stronger, more resilient company.





“The fundamentals of leadership are reflected in transparency and fairness. It is not always a smooth journey; sometimes it is defined by how you navigate the challenges, an instance of which was evident in the strength and resilience that Infosys embodied after the setback in 2008.”

## Senapathy “Kris” Gopalakrishnan

Chairman of Axilor Ventures

Axilor Ventures is an accelerator that helps start-ups during the early stage of their business journey. Mr Gopalakrishnan served as the vice chairman of Infosys from 2011 to 2014 and the chief executive officer and managing director of Infosys from 2007 to 2011.

Mr Gopalakrishnan is one of the co-founders of Infosys. Recognised as a global business and technology thought leader, he was voted the top CEO (IT Services category) in Institutional Investor's inaugural ranking of Asia's Top Executives and selected as one of the winners of the second Asian Corporate Director Recognition Awards by Corporate Governance Asia in 2011. He was elected president of India's apex industry chamber Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for 2013-14 and served as one of the co-chairs of the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2014.

In January 2011, the Government of India awarded Mr Gopalakrishnan the Padma Bhushan, the country's third-highest civilian honor. Mr Gopalakrishnan serves on the Board of Governors of Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST), is the Chairman, The Council, IISc Bangalore, and is the Chairman, Board of Governors of IIIT, Bangalore. He is the Chairman of the Vision Group on Information Technology of Karnataka Government, the Chairman of RBIH (Reserve Bank of India Innovation Hub) and the Chairman of CII Centre of Excellence in Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Start-ups (CIES).

Mr Gopalakrishnan is the chairman of Itihaasa Research, and Digital which publishes history of Indian IT industry as “itihaasa” app as well as reports on industrial and academic research in India. He is the Co-author of “Against All Odds – The IT Story of India”.

Mr Gopalakrishnan invests in promoting research on Brain sciences, aging related disorders as well as investing in start-ups and start-up ecosystem. His family philanthropy is Pratiksha Trust and investment arm is Pratithi.

Mr Gopalakrishnan holds master's degrees in physics and computer science from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. He is a Fellow of Indian National Academy of Engineers (INAE) and an Honorary Fellow of Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers (IETE) of India.

# How India Can Lead the World in the Age of Relentless AI Advancement

Artificial Intelligence is advancing at a relentless pace, reshaping industries, supply chains, and business models worldwide. In this disruptive moment, India has a unique opportunity to lead not by copying Silicon Valley's software-first playbook, but by fusing its deep manufacturing capabilities with cutting-edge AI. This combination of digital intelligence and physical products can become India's distinctive global advantage.

Indian companies such as The Tata Group, Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, and the TVS Group are strategically positioned to pioneer this shift. These firms already command strong competencies in automobiles, two-wheelers, tractors, and logistics. The next frontier is to embed AI into these physical systems to create intelligent products and platforms. Imagine tractors that use AI-driven soil analytics to guide farmers, two-wheelers that continuously learn rider behavior to improve safety, or logistics fleets that self-optimise routes using real-time data. These are not science fiction scenarios. They are the future of Indian Industry if companies act boldly.

The true competitive edge will come not just from adding software to hardware, but from reimagining strategy itself. Instead of selling just products, Indian firms can build AI-enabled ecosystems: vehicles that generate data, platforms that analyse it, and services that continuously improve performance. This shift moves companies from one-time transactions to lifelong customer relationships. It transforms tractors into agricultural intelligence platforms and two-wheelers into mobility services. By blending AI and manufacturing, India can define a new category: "intelligent physical systems."

However, technology advantage alone won't drive leadership. India needs business leaders with resilience, vision, and purpose. Resilience to navigate uncertainty as AI rewrites competitive rules. Vision to see beyond cost-driven manufacturing and imagine India as a global design and technology powerhouse. The Purpose is to ensure that AI-enabled progress benefits not just the elite but millions of farmers, workers, and small entrepreneurs. Leadership rooted in broader societal uplift can become India's moral differentiator in a world anxious about AI's impact.

The convergence of AI acceleration, Industrial strength, and purposeful leadership creates a once-in-a-century strategic opening. If Indian companies combine intelligence with Industry, and if leaders act with courage and clarity, India can move from being a participant in the global economy to shaping its next chapter.

As Mahatma Gandhi said: "The Future is shaped by actions we take in the present". Leaders can act now to lead in the future.



"India is at a leading stage filled with opportunities to blend its manufacturing base, agriculture, Industries, and technology with advancements in Artificial Intelligence to transform into intelligent physical systems. Business leadership with resilience, vision, and purpose can drive the country towards societal upliftment and establish it as a globally competitive technological powerhouse."


## Prof. Vijay Govindarajan

Coxe Distinguished Professor
Dartmouth College's Tuck School of Business


Vijay Govindarajan (VG) is the Coxe Distinguished Professor at Dartmouth College's Tuck School of Business, a Faculty Partner at the Silicon Valley incubator Mach49 and a Senior Advisor at the strategy consulting firm Acropolis Advisors. He is a New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestselling author.

His latest book is The Three Box Solution. His Harvard Business Review articles "Engineering Reverse Innovations" and "Stop the Innovation Wars" won McKinsey Awards for best article published in HBR. His HBR articles "How GE Is Disrupting Itself" and "The CEO's Role in Business Model Reinvention" are HBR all-time top-50 bestsellers.

# The Leadership Reset: A Playbook for Navigating Today's Complex World

Most executives recognise that the increased volatility and complexity of today's business environment demand the savvy use of digital tools. Yet few can explain why some enterprises extract disproportionate value from similar investments. The answer lies in leadership discipline—specifically, how leaders strategically sequence and integrate data infrastructure, operational processes, and human capabilities into sustained competitive advantage.

**Data: The Foundation Layer**

When OCBC deployed GenAI tools to 30,000 employees globally, the decision was the years spent building a unified data architecture capable of managing exponential increases in volume, variety, and velocity. The bank's private cloud data lake and enterprise data science platform were deliberately constructed as its foundation. This sequencing matters. Leaders navigating global and organisational complexity must recognise that GenAI applications can only be as resilient and reliable as the data infrastructure supporting them. OCBC's AI systems now process four million daily decisions across risk assessment, customer service, and sales optimisation—with plans to reach ten million by 2025. This scale is achievable only because clean, integrated, well-governed data flows consistently through every model.

**Process: Structural Separation as Innovation Catalyst**

Securitas Digital's approach reveals a different pathway: rather than retrofitting AI into existing operations, the security services company created entirely separate processes from its core business. This structural separation freed the digital unit to leverage AI and digital tools without legacy constraints, ultimately spawning novel business models, including SaaS offerings. The strategic insight here challenges conventional integration orthodoxy. When existing processes carry decades of accumulated complexity, attempting transformational change often triggers organisational resistance. Securitas demonstrated that building parallel structures—with distinct governance, metrics, and operating models—can accelerate innovation while protecting core operations. This process architecture enabled the company to experiment with predictive security models and automated reporting systems that would have faced insurmountable friction within traditional workflows. For leaders driving transformation in established enterprises, the lesson is counterintuitive: sometimes the fastest path to organisation-wide AI adoption begins with deliberate separation, not integration.

**People: Distributed Capability as Competitive Moat**

The human dimension reveals itself through contrasting implementation philosophies. OCBC's 72% productivity improvement emerged from democratising access—30,000 employees generating one million prompts represent collective organisational intelligence development. Meanwhile, Securitas Digital's separated structure enabled a different form of empowerment: dedicated teams unburdened by legacy thinking, free to reimagine security service delivery entirely. Both approaches share a common insight: sustainable advantage comes from distributing AI capability widely rather than concentrating it narrowly. Whether through universal access that transforms existing workforces into innovators or through autonomous units that can move at digital velocity, leading organisations recognise that resilience stems from embedded capability, not specialist dependency. The choice between democratisation and separation depends on organisational context, but the principle holds: AI advantage accrues to leaders who trust people with genuinely transformative tools and remove barriers to their application.

**The Strategic Integration Challenge**

The data-process-people framework demands orchestration, not mere implementation. Data infrastructure without process discipline generates operational chaos. Process frameworks without workforce readiness trigger organisational resistance. People's empowerment without robust data foundations produces frustration. The experiences of OCBC and Securitas Digital illustrate complementary approaches to this challenge—one through synchronised integration across existing structures, another through strategic separation that enables unfettered innovation.

Leaders in today's complex and volatile environments demonstrate that durable competitive advantage flows to those who build resilient data foundations, implement processes that accelerate rather than constrain experimentation—whether integrated or separated—and trust their people with genuinely powerful tools.



"In today's complex and volatile business environment, segmentation in leadership is crucial. The discipline of the leaders should be reflected in the robust data management, constant adoption of AI and digitalisation in the existing operations, distribution of AI capability evenly, and implementation of the agile processes for distinctive and sustainable outcomes."


## Prof. Amit Joshi

Professor of AI
Analytics and Marketing Strategy; IMD


Amit Joshi is Professor of AI, Analytics and Marketing Strategy. He specialises in helping organisations use artificial intelligence and develop their big data, analytics, and AI capabilities. An award-winning professor and researcher, he has extensive experience of AI and analytics-driven transformations in industries such as banking, fintech, retail, automotive, telecoms, and pharma.

Prof. Joshi believes that no organisation's digital transformation is complete until they really understand their data and how to upscale their analytical capabilities. He is currently focusing on how organisations can ensure that AI implementation occurs strategically and at scale rather than in small islands of excellence.

He has delivered customised programmes for several companies including UBS, Sonova, Johnson & Johnson, Guardian Life, Mars Petcare, Securitas, Bank Danamon, Bayer, Ooredoo, Siam Commercial Bank, Abu Dhabi School of Governance, Hanover RE, and Migros. He also advises start-ups on their strategies.

At IMD, he is Co-Director of the AI Strategy and Agentic Implementation programme and Director of the Generative AI for Business Sprint, as well as Director of the Business Analytics for Leaders programme.

Prof. Joshi's research, which focuses on long-run marketing strategy, analytics, and AI applications, has been published in top journals including the Journal of Marketing, Marketing Science, the Journal of Consumer Culture, the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Harvard Business Review, and MIT Sloan Management Review. He has twice won the MSI/H Paul Root Award for the best paper in the Journal of Marketing and the Robert D Buzzell Best Paper Award for the Marketing Science Institute publication with the most long-term impact.

His work and thought leadership have frequently been cited in the media and have been covered by outlets including NPR, CNN, NBC, Nikkei, the Financial Times, Fast Company, Business Standard, Fox News, Bloomberg, Forbes, Le Temps, Investor Relations Magazine, The Conversation, and Science Daily. He is frequently invited to give keynote speeches and led a panel discussion with marketing experts at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2020.

Before joining IMD in 2017, Prof. Joshi was in academia in the US and prior to that worked as a sales manager at Cadbury India, now part of the Mondelēz International group.

# Finding Clarity in the Noise: How Leaders Inspire, Decide, and Grow in a World of AI, Disruption, and Constant Distraction

Leaders today operate in a world of relentless noise, with meetings, crises, disruptions, and digital distractions that constantly demand and often divert their attention. The speed of information and the volume of decisions have never been higher. Yet amid this chaos, leadership must still create clarity, purpose, and calm. The true test of leadership now lies not in commanding attention, but in creating focus. Over the last year, I evaluated everything I was doing outside my core business - speaking engagements, social media, conferences, and more. By rationalising my calendar, I gained nearly 6 hours more a week. That's 312 hours a year, to think, reflect, and lead better!

**Leading Without Proximity**

This is the era of the leadership reset. COVID blew up our physical world overnight. The traditional model, where leaders inspired through proximity, presence, and personality, has been replaced by one where influence must travel across distance and digital channels. Tomorrow's leaders may rarely meet their teams in person, yet they must still build culture, accountability, and performance. Leadership will be measured not by visibility, but by impact, and how effectively one aligns human purpose with organisational outcomes in a fragmented world. As we move more global and possibly interstellar, this skill might be highly valued. But I confess the charm and warmth of face-to-face is still special.

**Human + AI Leadership**

We are now in a world where every invention, discovery, and insight is better with AI. From robotic surgeries, AI-assisted teleradiology, to personalised medicine, and AI-assisted diagnostic devices, AI is integral to healthcare. In medicine and pharmaceuticals, where I work, AI is mainstream. The same holds for financial services, manufacturing, and even the mobile networks we use. In workplaces, more employees are increasingly "human + AI" enabled; thus, the leader's role shifts from supervision to symphony. The new skillset demands digital empathy—the ability to sense, understand, and guide through both human intuition and machine insight. Emotional intelligence remains the cornerstone, but it must now integrate algorithmic intelligence—the wisdom to use AI not as a crutch, but as a co-creator. Leading this hybrid workforce means blending empathy with analytics, creativity with computation.

**Agility Amid Uncertainty**

From geopolitical conflicts and trade tariffs to climate shocks and fractured supply chains, disruption is the new normal. The defining quality of leadership today is agility and inspiring confidence even in chaos. Resilience is no longer about recovery; it is about readiness to change and adapt. I have often questioned the business model and would rather transform than be disrupted. The greater risk is the inability to change and watching your business become obsolete!

**Growth with Purpose**

As inequality widens and populations age, the future belongs to those who can drive growth with inclusion. Leadership must connect ambition with empathy, technology with humanity, and progress with purpose. In a noisy, uncertain, AI-driven world, the leaders who endure will be those who can inspire without proximity, decide without certainty, and grow without leaving anyone behind.

I love history and often recall an anecdote I model my leadership on: "In ancient Rome, whenever a victorious General or Ruler paraded through cheering crowds, a slave would whisper 'Memento mori' - remember you are mortal." This remains a timeless reminder that humility and awareness of mortality are vital, especially at the pinnacle of success.



"The leadership course lies in an adaptive attitude towards constantly evolving disruptions and digital transformations. True leadership is accompanied by focus, clarity, and purpose. This era of leadership reset must be driven without proximity, blending technology, and AI with empathy, embracing agility in chaos, and driving growth with inclusion."


## Shobana Kamineni

Promoter Director, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd
Executive Chairperson, Apollo HealthCo Ltd


Shobana Kamineni is the Promoter Director, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd and Executive Chairperson, Apollo HealthCo Ltd, and a member of its founding family. She has spearheaded significant initiatives, including the development of three of the largest verticals within the Apollo Group and the leadership of India's largest integrated digital healthcare platform, Apollo 24/7. She oversees Apollo Pharmacy, comprising over 6000 stores nationwide, and has been Founder Chairperson of Apollo Munich Health Insurance (divested to HDFC Ergo). Notably, she pioneered the establishment of a 'Biobank', recognised by Time Magazine among the top 10 ideas of the decade in Life Sciences.

As the first woman President of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in over a century, Shobana Kamineni made history. Committed to global public health enhancement, she serves on the board and audit committee of Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), focusing on diagnostic test development for poverty– related diseases. She founded 'Billion Hearts Beating', an NGO promoting heart disease prevention in India.

Additionally, she holds roles at the World Economic Forum (WEF), advocating for India's workforce preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and digital inclusion in healthcare.

Her achievements have earned her prestigious awards, including the Women Economic Forum's 'Businesswomen of the Decade' and honorary doctorates from Bryant University, USA, and BML Munjal University, India.

# The Leadership Reset

The next decade brings with it great opportunities and challenges. The reset of foreign policies and the global rebalance will impact business models and the way of doing business. A paradigm shift in the leadership mindset!

I believe leaders will need to drive transformation across their businesses, in technology, skills, and in developing strong human capital. Respecting diversity and building effective processes to grow & value it. Drive innovation and create a strong, globally competitive mindset. Build consensus on shared values and the mission. And greater value addition per person. Improve productivity of all resources. Importantly, develop strong relationships with all stakeholders. To get the required network support for successful transformation efforts.

To lead with a future-ready, flexible mindset will be most important. The fast-dawning age of AI is both a leadership challenge and an opportunity. Leaders must be ready to reimagine and restructure their organisations to leverage AI, not only to increase productivity but also to protect livelihoods and enhance the work and professional satisfaction of their teams.

As a leader, I would like to work hard to ensure the business adapts to the transformative impact of the volatile environment. In an increasingly transactional world, I would like to continue to take a long-term view of the business. To invest in building trust with all stakeholders, negotiating fairly. In not getting tempted with more tactical, opportunistic short-term gain objectives.

Innovation, at all levels of an organisation, will distinguish the winners of tomorrow, and creativity is the key to innovation. A leader can inspire creativity at all levels of the organisation by being a thought leader and an ideas person. To do this, a leader must be curious, open-minded, and have a wide range of interests.

There is a paradigmatic shift in the pace of change. As a leader, I must cultivate both agility and foresight. To lead change instead of just adapting to it!

Investing in sustainability, large organisations will need to drive decarbonisation across the supply chain. Including the tier 2 & tier 3 suppliers.

The leader needs to lead with even more compassion than before. It's a more complex world! Sensitised to both the people within the company and to the community & society.



"In the coming decade of rapid transformation, leadership will be defined by agility, foresight, and compassion- balancing innovation and sustainability while building trust, valuing diversity, and reimagining organisations to harness technology and human potential together."

## Geetanjali Kirloskar

Chairperson & MD of
Kirloskar Systems Pvt Ltd
(Partner company of all Toyota Joint ventures in India)

Geetanjali Kirloskar is the Chairperson & MD of Kirloskar Systems Pvt Ltd (Partner company of all Toyota Joint ventures in India) across 7 joint ventures, working closely with them on strategy, on growing the partnerships, and driving new joint venture business with Toyota.

A distinguished Marketing and Brand professional from 1987 to 2013, Mrs Kirloskar is widely recognised for her expertise in brand building, strategy, and positioning. She transitioned from her marketing career to the family business in 2013 and took over as Chairperson and Managing Director of Kirloskar Systems Private Limited in December 2022.

She has been working on strengthening the India-Japan business & partnerships as Chair of India Japan Partnership Council, CII and Co-Chair of Japan Council. Mrs Kirloskar also works closely with JETRO (Japan External Trade Organisation) as Advisor for India, for Japanese companies entering India for investment and partnerships.

She was also instrumental in the setting up of the India-Japan Council for the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, for manpower development for Japan and people to people connect.

She has also been instrumental in the setting up of two Joint Ventures: Sakra World Hospital with Toyota Tsusho Corporation and Secom Japan and was Chairperson, & Toyota Tsusho Insurance Brokerage with Toyota Tsusho Corporation and Kirloskar Systems Limited as Chairperson till date.

Mrs Kirloskar is also a Director on the Boards of Kirloskar Proprietary Limited, Karnataka Invest Forum, and Rhode Island School of Design USA.

# Reinventing the Leadership Paradigm

In the aftermath of COVID-19, the global business landscape has undergone a rapid transformation, reshaping how organisations prepare for the future. Geopolitical and economic disruptions have fractured supply chains, driving long-term capital investment shifts. While the drive for sustainability has been deprioritised in some regions, it remains a focus in others. The recent surge in Agentic Artificial Intelligence promises to revolutionise productivity, innovation, and competitive positioning - presenting a new set of opportunities and challenges for leaders.

Even as existing businesses are transforming, new business models are emerging, as evidenced in massive reallocation of global capital in new areas of data centres, semiconductor fabrication, renewable energy, battery storage, critical minerals processing, that will power the AI revolution. The energy transition is driving record investments into renewables, solar power, electric vehicles, battery storage, nuclear energy, and rising geopolitical tensions have led to greater emphasis on defence manufacturing.

Management and leadership face the twin challenge of maximising value in current businesses while investing in future areas, requiring three broad imperatives to unlock disproportionate value:

**Redrawing the new talent code**

To grow in emerging sectors, leaders will require a new set of managers who are technologically fluent and globally competitive. They will have to be comfortable working in new industries, adaptable to learning new skills, especially integrating digital capabilities and accelerating innovation at scale. The shape of the talent pyramid is becoming flatter with gradual dilution of hierarchies. The nature of talent dynamics is also changing - specialists in AI, data science, energy systems will need to blend with specialists in trade or geopolitics. On one hand, workforce at the bottom of the pyramid is evolving to a mix of permanent, gig workers; on the other, middle management will become challenged on capability and decision-making.

**Long-term strategy and capital for innovation**

Leaders must pivot to creating economic space for R&D and innovation, which will eventually become their strongest moat. As significant allocation of capital will shift towards emerging businesses, leaders will have to invest equally in acquiring and upskilling talent in new areas. Besides capital strategies, leaders will have to get bolder in forging partnerships and ecosystem collaboration around the world to gain access to the best technologies, IP, talent, and markets. Often, a 'Future-Back' approach helps sequence strategic investments in a graded phased manner while keeping the end-state vision in mind. Balancing capital allocation to meet the transformation needs of existing businesses is also critical. The power-train evolution in automotive, the rise of quick commerce, smart metering expansion in utilities, explosion of fintech, digitisation of customer-facing touchpoints, and the shop floor are a few examples of shifts that leaders will have to embrace. Management teams will have to think boldly and execute with precision.

**Leadership and culture**

Leaders must embrace the mindset of agility and boldness: the freedom to fail fast, learn fast, and iterate continuously will become an integral part of culture. Compassion and empathy are equally important as these traits are fundamental to building trust among employees, along with frequent and open communication, especially in times of uncertainty and change.

Lastly, on an individual level, leaders will have to personally engage with technology to set the tone for their teams and inspire confidence throughout the organisation.

The new leadership paradigm will require leaders to create an environment conducive to innovation, resilience, and sustained growth in an era of rapid technological and market shifts.



"Technological transformation is at the cusp of the post-COVID era; leadership must evolve as per the new paradigm, which calls for adapting new skills, especially integrating digital capabilities and accelerating innovation at scale, reimagining talent strategy and capital allocation for a new revolution, along with continuous learning, agility, and empathy, which becomes an imperative part of the culture."

## Rajiv Memani

President, CII (2025-26)
Chairman and CEO,
EY India

Rajiv Memani is Chairman and CEO of EY India, the leading professional services organisation in India with over 100,000 employees across entities. He is also a member of EY Global Executive board as the Chair of its Growth Markets Council (GMC).

He is a trusted advisor to large Indian companies, Private Equity funds and multinational organisations, principally advising them on building confidence, mergers & acquisitions, technology, and smart capital allocation strategies. In his GMC role, his responsibilities include advancing EY's growth markets agenda and connecting their priorities with the global firm's investments.

Prior to becoming the Chairman, Mr Memani established EY India's market-leading Corporate Finance (now Strategy & Transactions) practice in the late 1990s.

Mr Memani is the President of CII for 2025-26. He contributes actively to the public discourse on tax and policy reforms and has been a member of several high-powered Government of India committees, including the Ministry of Finance taskforce that drafted a new Direct Tax Code in 2019.

In addition, he is the President of the Board of Him Jyoti School, an institution dedicated to providing quality education to underprivileged girls in Uttarakhand. He is also a Board member of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Sirmaur and a member of the governing council of KREA University. Mr Memani has also been the driving force behind EY Foundation, which is active in the areas of education, entrepreneurship for rural women and environment.

He is a Chartered Accountant and holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University.

# The Leadership Reset: Building Future-Ready Enterprises

From its inception, the Bharti ethos has been rooted in empowerment, trust, ownership, transparency, and the belief that every employee is a leader in their own right. This philosophy, the Bharti DNA, has created an ecosystem where innovation thrives, accountability is natural, and agility becomes second nature. Empowerment at Bharti Enterprises is a system of belief that powers action across every level of the organisation.

Airtel embodies this Leadership Reset. In an era defined by disruption, Airtel has continually reinvented itself by anticipating change rather than reacting to it. From pioneering mobile connectivity in India to leading the digital transformation of today, Airtel has been relentless in future-proofing its business through technology.

At the heart of this transformation lies a strategic embrace of Cloud, Data Centres, and Artificial Intelligence. Airtel's cutting-edge Cloud offerings are enabling Indian enterprises to scale securely and efficiently. Our world-class Nxtra Data Centres form the digital backbone of countless organisations, ensuring resilience and speed in an interconnected world.

Artificial Intelligence is being woven into the fabric of Airtel's operations, from predictive network optimisation to combating fraud and blocking spam calls - ensuring a safer, smarter, and more seamless experience, where nearly 70% of financial losses were reduced. through this customer solution.

At the same time, skilling and reskilling of Airtel's employees has been a constant, enabling us to remain at the cutting-edge while also ensuring a relatively shock-proof system that measures and adopts tectonic shifts in the digital realm.

These initiatives reflect a leadership mindset that views technology both as a tool, and as an enabler of progress and trust.

Leadership at Bharti also extends beyond business. It manifests in the impact created through the Bharti Airtel Foundation, the group's philanthropic arm dedicated to driving holistic, inclusive growth. The Foundation's 155 Satya Bharti Schools provide free education to more than 36,000 students, redefining rural education by nurturing young minds with modern learning opportunities. Its new initiative, TheTeacherApp, exemplifies resilience in education—offering capacity building to teachers in new-age pedagogy and digital methodologies to build future-ready classrooms.

Complementing this initiative is the Bharti Airtel Scholarship Programme, which supports bright students pursuing technology-driven undergraduate courses, nurturing a new generation of innovators who will lead India's digital tomorrow. At its peak, this Scholarship Programme will support 4,000 Bharti Scholars – honing bright young minds who will sustain and indeed, propel India's digital future for decades to come.

This convergence of technology, talent, and trust defines Bharti's leadership reset. It is a vision that harmonises purpose with performance, one that values empowerment as much as excellence. In the face of rapid change, Bharti's ability to balance human empathy with technological foresight ensures that its enterprises remain not only future-ready but also future-relevant.

In essence, Bharti's story is that of continuous renewal. It is one of leaders who learn, unlearn, and relearn. More significantly, it is a testament to a legacy that has made leadership a collective act, ensuring that the future is actively and conscientiously nurtured.



"The story of leadership is one of continuous renewal—a legacy of empowerment, trust, and collective action where technology, talent, and purpose converge. It is about leaders who learn, unlearn, and relearn, ensuring that in a fast-changing world, organisations remain both future-ready and future-relevant."

## Rakesh Bharti Mittal

Vice-Chairman,
Bharti Enterprises

Rakesh Bharti Mittal is the Vice-Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, one of India's leading business groups in Telecom Services, Digital Infrastructure & Devices, Space Communications, Financial Services, and Real Estate.

Rakesh served as the President, CII for the year 2018-19, and is the Co-Chair of the India-Uzbekistan Business Council. In the past, Rakesh has served as a member of the India-UK CEO Forum.

A passionate advocate for quality education, he is actively engaged in enhancing school and higher education as Co-Chairman of Bharti's philanthropic arm, Bharti Airtel Foundation.

He is a member of the Board at the Indian School of Business and Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Bharti Institute of Public Policy.

Rakesh is a Member of the Board of Trustees and the Governing Body at Plaksha University and also Co-Chairman of the Advisory Board of Bharti School of Telecommunication Technology & Management at IIT-Delhi.

# Leadership Lessons

Some of us are fortunate to be touched by remarkable leaders and they shape our thinking and what we become over a period of time. That fortune for me came in the form of experiencing working life in just one enterprise i.e. Tata.

While there are several leadership qualities one must develop or have, including facing reality, listening and learning, humility, etc the two bookends of leadership are: finding purpose and building culture. These two, in my view, have been the key elements of the continued growth of Tata enterprises. It is sector agnostic, time independent, and enables long-term sustainability of firms irrespective of the disruption unleashed from time to time.

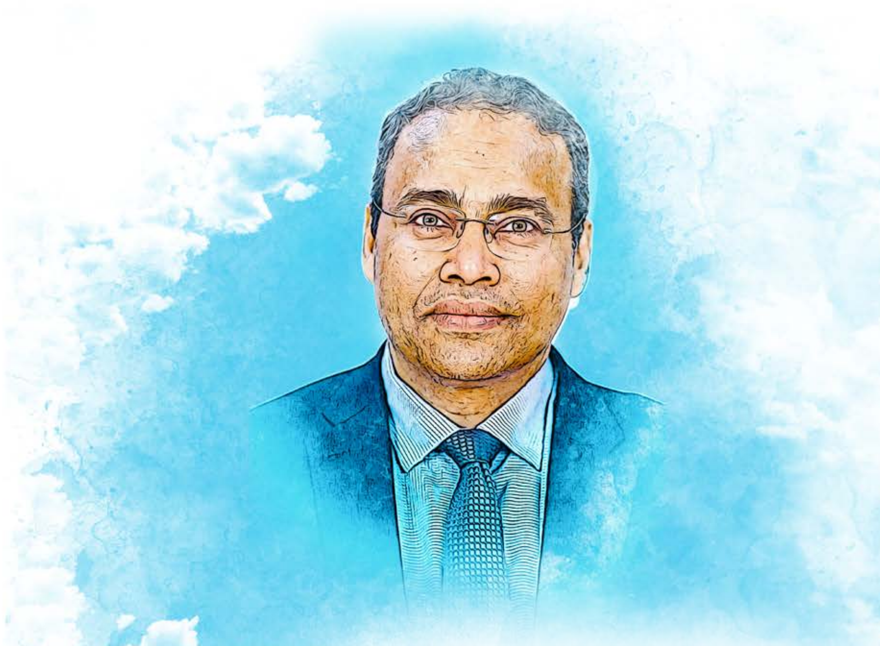
For us at Tata the purpose is to improve the quality of life of the communities we serve. It is as wide as that, hence irrespective of business or sector, our leaders and teams are working to do just that. Take a mundane product like common salt, we see it as a way to deliver micro-nutrients to the masses. We started the Iodisation campaign as part of Tata Salt, thereby eliminating Goitre in India.

Every product has a purpose in addressing a social good like impacting sustainability, decarbonisation etc.

The element of culture and values we wish to build is captured in one statement, "Leadership with Trust". That is to state we aim to lead in every field we choose to serve, but more importantly, we will strive to do that in a way that it builds trust. This focus on trust has been woven into the fabric of the companies by the conduct of leaders who have served the enterprise, and as a philosophy which is ingrained in the enterprise. Building trust with stakeholders enforces and ensures a set of behaviours, including integrity, excellence, and responsibility. These are being increasingly codified so that a large organisation has a common understanding through the Tata Code of Conduct, making managing business ethics a process and an act.

Hence, the two bookends of leadership which matter are finding purpose and building culture.





"The two bookends of leadership are: finding purpose and building culture. It is sector agnostic, time independent, and enables long-term sustainability of firms irrespective of the disruption unleashed from time to time."

## R Mukundan

President Designate, CII (2025-26)
Managing Director & CEO,
Tata Chemicals Limited

Mr R Mukundan, Managing Director & CEO of Tata Chemicals Limited, joined Tata Administrative Service in 1990, after completion of MBA from FMS, Delhi University.

He is a distinguished alumnus of IIT, Roorkee, a Fellow of Indian Chemical Society and an alumnus of Harvard Business School.

He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in business administration by XIM University, Bhubaneshwar.

With over 30 years of experience at Tata Group, Mr Mukundan has held various responsibilities across the Chemical, Automotive, and Hospitality sectors of the Tata Group. He is currently the President Designate of CII for FY 2025-26.

# Leading with Purpose and Trust in Times of Change

Leadership, to me, has always been less about authority and more about understanding. The world around us is changing faster than ever, which is reflected in evolving technology, aspirations, and even the way we connect with each other. In such times, leading a team or an organisation isn't about having all the answers. It's about creating a space where people feel free to ask questions, explore ideas, and grow together.

Over the years, I have realised that purpose sits at the heart of it all. When decisions are driven by a clear sense of purpose, something larger than profit - they tend to endure. Take our City Centre projects, for instance. The idea wasn't just to build malls, but to create places where people meet, share moments, and feel a sense of belonging. That sense of purpose guided us through many ups and downs, reminding why we do what we do.

If purpose gives direction, trust gives strength. I have always believed that leadership is as much about listening as it is about leading. When people know they are heard and valued, trust grows, and with it, resilience. During challenging times like the 2008 financial crisis, it was this trust, this shared belief in our values and each other that helped us find our footing again.

I also think leadership today is about staying curious. The world keeps shifting, and so must we. Yet in all the changes, it is important not to lose sight of what makes us human: empathy, fairness, and compassion. These aren't soft qualities; they're what make leadership sustainable.

At its core, leadership is a continuous journey of learning, of trying, failing, reflecting, and rebuilding. And perhaps the most meaningful part of this journey is discovering that our real legacy lies not in what we build, but in how we make people feel along the way.



"The world keeps shifting, and so must we. Yet in all the changes, it is important not to lose sight of what makes us human: empathy, fairness, and compassion. These aren't soft qualities; they're what make leadership sustainable."

## Harshavardhan Neotia

Entrepreneur,
Chairman of Ambuja Neotia Group

Harshavardhan Neotia is an Entrepreneur, and presently Chairman of Ambuja Neotia Group.

The Group operates across four business verticals: Real Estate, Hospitality, Healthcare, and Education. Headquartered in Kolkata, the group's projects are mostly located in Eastern India.

He completed his schooling from La Martiniere for Boys, Kolkata. He graduated with a B.Com (Hons.) degree from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, and went on to complete the Owner President Management Programme (OPM) from Harvard Business School, USA.

For his work in social housing Harshavardhan Neotia was conferred with Padma Shri from the Hon'ble President of India in 1999. He is also a recipient of the YPO Legacy of Honour Award. He has been conferred with D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) by the Vidyasagar University, West Bengal as well as by Assam Royal Global University. Mr Neotia has also been awarded the Banga Bibhushan – Highest civilian honour from Government of West Bengal.

He is an active Member and Past President of FICCI and also Past President of AIMA. He is presently member Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), Chairperson of Board of Governors of National Institute of Technology (NIT) Mizoram, Council Member of the National Culture Fund, Government of India and former Chairman of National Institute of Technical Teachers' Training & Research (NITTTR).

He has formerly been on the board of IIM Kolkata, IIT Kharagpur, and on The Court of Jawaharlal Nehru University.

He heads Jnana Pravaha, a Centre for Cultural Studies and Research in Varanasi and is one of the trustees of Shree Somnath Trust.

He is the Honorary Consul of Israel in West Bengal.

# Leadership in a TURN World

We live today in a world marked by enormous flux and disruptive change, where leaders are constantly challenged by the twin forces of complexity and opportunity. The geo-political and geo-economic challenges, climate emergency, and game-changing technological advancements like AI are no longer episodic but the new normal. This is a pivotal inflection point that is shaped by what I call TURN – an era of Turbulence, Uncertainty, and Rapid change that calls for Novel strategies to reimagine the future. To build the winning enterprises of tomorrow, leaders will have to drive transformational change by enabling game-changing innovation, fostering technological prowess, and creating extremely agile and resilient organisations powered by entrepreneurial talent.

In my leadership journey, the triad of Vision, Values, and Vitality have been a guiding force, be it in times of adversity or in forging new pathways for the future. A superordinate Vision that is aspirational, unifying, and motivational imparts a larger purpose and meaning to individual endeavour. Today's tectonic shifts and pressing challenges make it imperative that we redefine a compelling and larger vision that powers an organisation not only to be globally competitive but in a manner that enriches value for society. At ITC, we call this a paradigm of Responsible Competitiveness, that drives unique business models which not only build extreme competitiveness but simultaneously create environmental and social capital.

An inspiring Vision is strengthened by unshakeable Values that form the moral compass of an enterprise and its talent. Timeless Values serve to guide thought, action, and strategy and act as strong guardrails, be in times of crisis or in opportunity. For us in ITC, values like Trusteeship and Trust are core foundations of our relationships with all stakeholders, be it consumers, investors, or employees. Vitality is an enterprise capability that needs to be constantly nurtured to remain ahead of the curve, be contemporary, competitive, agile, and future-oriented. To me, these 3 Vs provide an enduring framework that is invaluable in navigating the dynamic environment of today.

As we embark on building future-forward enterprises, the most valuable asset, to my mind, will lie in its inspired talent. It is therefore super-critical that talent is nurtured to adopt a growth mindset with a future-orientation that enables them to embrace constant challenges, seek solutions to complex problems through perseverance and effort, take calculated risks and navigate uncharted territory, whilst harnessing the power of collaboration with ecosystems within and outside. Leadership is about creating and mentoring teams that are empowered as well as armed with the right resources to win in the world of tomorrow. Indeed, in the TURN environment that we live in, the role of a leader, in the words of John Quincy Adams, a former President of the United States, will be about inspiring others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more.



"In my leadership journey, the triad of Vision, Values, and Vitality have been a guiding force, be it in times of adversity or in forging new pathways for the future. Leadership is about creating and mentoring teams that are empowered as well as armed with the right resources to win in the world of tomorrow."

## Sanjiv Puri

Immediate Past President, CII
Chairman & Managing Director
ITC Ltd

Sanjiv Puri is the Chairman & MD of ITC Ltd, a leading Indian conglomerate with businesses in FMCG, Hotels, Paperboards & Packaging, Agri Business, and IT. He is also the Chairman of ITC Hotels Limited, ITC Infotech India Ltd, its subsidiaries in UK and USA and Surya Nepal Private Ltd. Mr Puri is an alumnus of IIT Kanpur, and Wharton School of Business.

Spearheading the 'ITC Next' vision, he has driven an extensive strategy reset to build a future-tech, climate positive, innovative, and inclusive enterprise with sharp thrust on agility, consumer centricity and inspired talent. He has led the digital transformation of ITC, driving competitiveness of ITC's businesses and exploring new tech-driven opportunities. Mr Puri has also powered an ambitious Sustainability 2.0 vision that addresses key issues such as climate change, circular economy and inclusive growth.

Mr Puri is the Immediate Past President of CII. He was the Chairman of the Expert Group on agri-exports constituted by the 15th Finance Commission, a Member of the NITI Aayog Group on 'Farm to Table-driving India's agriculture sector digitally' and the Chairman of the 'Action Council on ESG in Business' under the aegis of Business 20 India.

He is on the Board of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum and a Member of the BRICS Business Council. He is the Chairman of the Board of Governors of IIT, Gandhinagar and on the Governing and Executive Board of Indian School of Business. He is also on the Governing Body of the National Council of Applied Economic Research.

Mr Puri was conferred with the 'Distinguished Alumnus Award of the year 2018' by the IIT, Kanpur. In 2025 he was presented the AIMA – JRD TATA Corporate Leadership Award by the All India Management Association (AIMA), and the prestigious Sir Jahangir Ghandy Medal for Industrial and Social Peace by XLRI, Jamshedpur. He was presented the 'Best CEO' Award by Business Today, recognised as the "Best CEO" in the 'Diversified Conglomerate' category by Fortune India and honoured with the 'Business Leader of the Year Award' by AIMA in 2024. He also received the Transformational Leader Award 2022-23 from the Asia Centre for Corporate Governance and Sustainability. Mr Puri was bestowed with an Honorary Doctorate by the XIM University, Bhubaneshwar, and presented the 'IMPACT Person of the Year, 2020' Award by exchange4media, a digital news platform.

# Leadership Reset: A Lifelong Pursuit

Leadership is not about a one-off event, but it's a journey shaped by experience, values, and the ability to imbibe continuously. For me, some of the lessons drawn from over four decades in business are grounded in humility, learning, and trust.

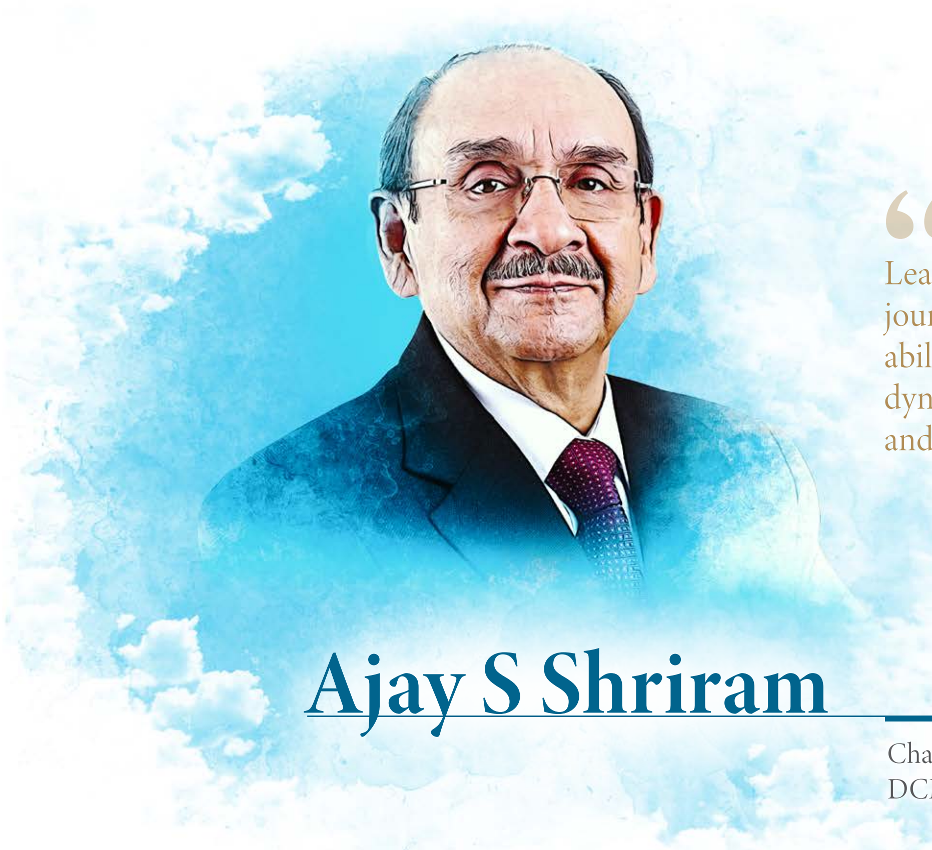
Having started my career on the shop floor of DCM Ltd., I learnt that leadership begins with listening. A pivotal moment at the sugar factory illustrates this: when a technical crisis halted operations, it wasn't the senior engineers who found the immediate solution, but a seasoned worker, Babu Tarseem Lal. His practical suggestion enabled a temporary fix and paved the way for a permanent solution. This experience reinforced a vital leadership lesson that wisdom can come from any level, and effective leaders must remain open to ideas from all quarters.

Our company's leadership philosophy is deeply rooted in lifelong learning. This includes "Outside-In Learning," in other words, encouraging promoters, executives, officers, and workers to seek knowledge beyond their immediate environments. Whether through global visits, advanced courses, or Industry interactions, the goal is to bring fresh perspectives into the organisation that foster innovation and adaptability. A conscious effort is then made to apply best practices in our own business.

Relationships form another cornerstone of a leader's ethos. Trust-based relationships with employees, suppliers, customers, and Industry bodies are not just strategic assets—they are the bedrock of long-term success. A case in point is the turnaround of Swatantra Bharat Mills, achieved through transparent engagement with banks and stakeholders, showcasing the power of trust. My tenure as CII President highlighted how mutual respect and transparency can unlock collaboration and resilience, especially during challenging times.

People-centric leadership is a theme that our Founder Sir Shri Ram, endeavoured to maintain in all business operations. DCM Shriram's culture of long-term employee loyalty, empathetic listening, and transparent communication has helped avoid labour disputes and build a motivated workforce. Leadership is therefore not confined to the boardroom; it thrives in everyday interactions and shared responsibilities.

Finally, leadership is a dynamic blend of humility, learning, relationships, and values. It's about creating an environment where people feel empowered to contribute, ideas are welcomed regardless of hierarchy, and decisions are guided by integrity and purpose.



"Leadership is not about a one-off event, but a journey shaped by experience, values, and the ability to imbibe continuously. Leadership is a dynamic blend of humility, learning, relationships, and values."

## Ajay S Shriram

Chairman and Sr. Managing Director,
DCM Shriram Ltd.

Mr Ajay S. Shriram is Chairman and Sr. Managing Director of DCM Shriram Ltd.

Post his schooling from The Doon School, Dehradun (India), Mr Shriram obtained a Bachelor's degree in Commerce from Sydenham College, Bombay. He attended various training & management development programs in India & overseas and participated in the "Program for Management Development" (PMD) at the Harvard Business School, Boston, USA.

He is the Past President, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). He is also the Chairman of the Governing Body of Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC) and IIM, Sirmaur (Himachal Pradesh).

Mr Shriram has been conferred with Degree of Doctor of Letters (Honoris Causa) by BML Munjal University.

# The Challenge of Leadership

Leaders today need to deal with five meta forces: geopolitical volatility; technological upheaval; demographic transformation; global warming, and a major conflict between unlocked aspirations and inequality. Such major changes inhibit decision making and constrain risk taking. Jeff Bezos, in a recent interview, made a profound though obvious observation that humans tend to overweight risk and underweight opportunity in their calculus. Even with all the volatility in the world today, leaders need to look for opportunities and not let them pass.

At the pith, a CEO has four truly unique functions. It is to set the aspiration and obtain organisational alignment on the vision. They need to allocate capital and resources, they need to hire and manage top talent, and they need to do all this by making great use of their time. If they are doing more than this, they are doing somebody else's job.

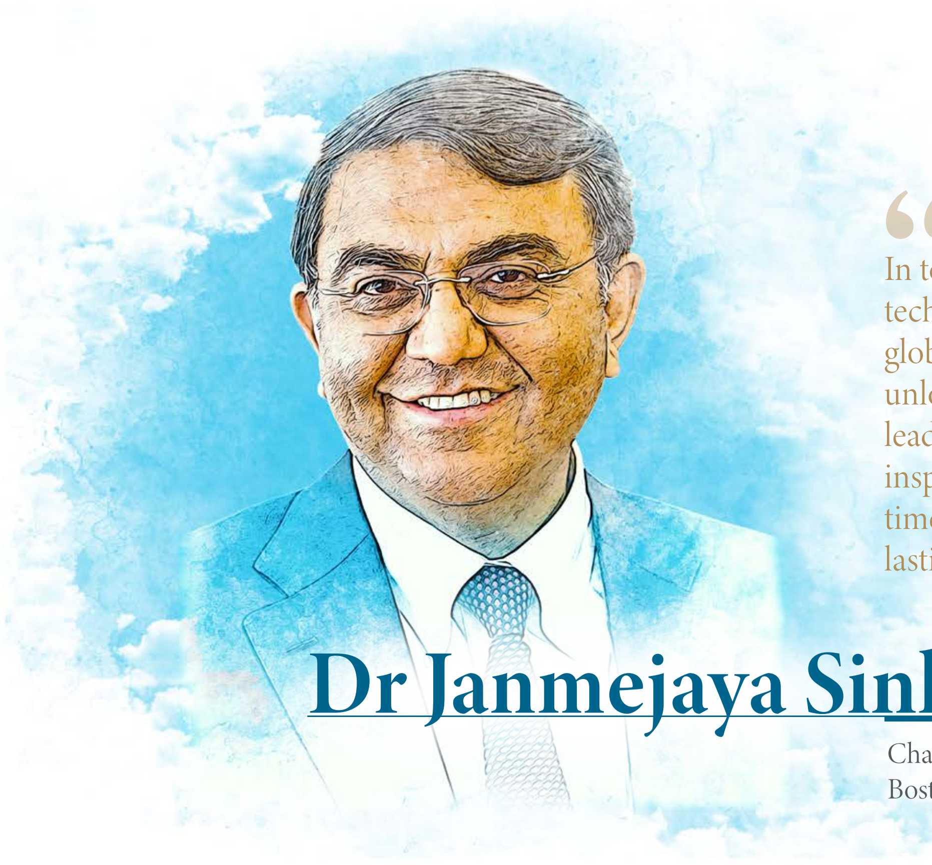
The role of the CEO is to set an aspiration which is worthy. One that stretches the team but does not break it. Create excitement around this vision and obtain alignment around this aspiration.

The CEO thereafter must allocate resources in line with the aspiration. Often resources are only seen to be capital but in fact the people chosen to lead an initiative are even more important than the capital allocated. It is an important job for the CEO to create a team fit for purpose. He needs to ensure the team has the skill and capability to deliver the Company's aspiration. He or she needs to lead the team and not be captured by it. He or she must not belong to any cliques and must expect people to behave in a professional manner. He must support and evaluate his team and provide feedback as required and compensate people based on their performance.

Finally, and most importantly, the CEO must judiciously spend his or her time. With time the CEO's need to answer – where to spend time, how efficiently their time is used and how much energy they have on different issues on which they must spend time. This is critical for them to work through as in today's fast-volatile world they need the agility to act fast and effectively.

I might steal another quote from Jeff Bezos and urge CEOs to remember that thinking small is a self-fulfilling prophecy!





"In today's era, leaders deal with geopolitical volatility, technological upheaval, demographic transformation, global warming, and a major conflict between unlocked aspirations and inequality. Effective leadership requires firm decision-making, setting an inspiring vision, allocating capable resources, utilising time effectively, and building a skilled team to drive a lasting impact with agility and sustained results."

## Dr Janmejaya Sinha

Chairman - India,
Boston Consulting Group

Dr Janmejaya Sinha is Chairman of Boston Consulting Group's (BCG) India Practice. Previously, he served as Chairman of Asia-Pacific region between 2009-2018 and as a member of the firm's Executive Commitee between 2006-2018.

He is a prolific columnist and co-author of "Untangling Conflict: An Introspective Guide for Families in Business" published by Penguin, and "Your Strategy Needs A Strategy" published by Harvard Business Review Press. He also co-edited the book titled "Own The Future" published by Wiley. In 2010, the Consulting Magazine named him one of the Top 25 most influential consultants in the world.

He serves on the boards of – Centre for Energy Environment and Water; The Nature Conservancy India; Ananta Centre; The CII-Triveni Water Institute; Army Insurance Group; The Economic Times Advisory Council; among others.

He has been a member of various committees set up by the Government of India, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and Indian Banks' Association (IBA). He was a member of the Committee of Chief Ministers on adoption of Digital Payments. He is a member of the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII), National Council and currently co-chairs the CII Economic Affairs Council.

Prior to joining BCG, he worked with the Reserve Bank of India for several years across different departments. He has also worked briefly for the World Bank. Dr Sinha has a Ph.D from the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, US, a BA and an MA in Economics from Clare College, Cambridge University, UK and a BA and MA in History from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, India.

# Pioneering Healthcare with Purpose, Innovation, and Integrity

Earlier this year, New York-based Newsweek recognised Medanta as the Best Private Hospital in India for the sixth year in a row. Receiving this distinction year after year stands as a testament to the unwavering commitment that my colleagues and I have made to deliver excellence in healthcare, medical technology, and innovation.

Medanta's journey began in the late 1980s, when I returned to India after practicing as a cardiac surgeon for many years in the United States. Upon my return, I recognised the urgent need for an advanced cardiac care centre in India and helped create the Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre, a dedicated hospital for heart care. Though Escorts achieved remarkable success and earned widespread acclaim, I felt that my mission was incomplete; India still lacked an integrated, multidisciplinary medical environment essential for managing complex medical conditions.

It was then that the vision for Medanta – The Medicity was born, a doctor-led institution designed to deliver world-class healthcare by combining the highest standards of medical care at an affordable price, medical education, and research. The goal was not only to provide advanced treatment but also to raise disease awareness, enable early detection, and improve patient outcomes.

Today, we take immense pride in what we have accomplished—a network of six hospitals across North and East India, each setting new standards in healthcare delivery, which have "democratised" healthcare by bringing world-class expertise to both rural and urban regions that had long been underserved.

In just over 15 years, we have cared for millions of patients, including tens of thousands of foreign nationals who have chosen our institute in search of advanced and trusted medical care. Our growing ecosystem of clinical laboratories, retail pharmacies, and a 24×7 digital and e-ICU platform ensures that patients can access our expertise wherever they may be.

Our mission is clear: to provide world-class, affordable healthcare in an ethical and safe environment, supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure, and guided by respect and dignity for every individual. Central to our philosophy is the belief that "Har Ek Jaan Anmol"—every life is invaluable. Our approach places the patient at the heart of everything we do, supported by a commitment to excellence in infrastructure, technology, talent, and trust.

Our doctors rank among the finest in their respective fields, placing Medanta on par with global leaders in medical care. Alongside them, our dedicated team of nurses, diagnostic experts, and healthcare professionals work tirelessly to deliver seamless, compassionate treatment to every patient.

Our journey so far has been one of continuous learning and evolution, with every milestone reinforcing our steadfast commitment to our guiding principles — of healing that goes beyond treatment, grounded in empathy, compassion, innovation, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to the patient's well-being. I have also instilled my own personal philosophy into the institution — every day, one must be better than the last; one must be in constant pursuit of deepening one's knowledge, uphold integrity, strengthen compassion, and broaden impact. Continuous improvement is not just our goal — it is our responsibility.

The lessons we've learned along the way remind us that our guiding principles help us stay true to our vision — to uphold integrity in every action, continuously raise the bar for excellence, and persevere to deliver healthcare that truly makes a difference. These values will continue to guide us in the days ahead, ensuring that every step forward reflects the same vision, integrity, and dedication that have defined our journey from the very beginning.



"Our journey has been one of continuous learning and evolution, guided by our belief that every life is invaluable and that healing must go beyond treatment—grounded in empathy, compassion, innovation, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to the patient's well-being."

## Dr Naresh Trehan

CMD
Medanta – The Medicity

Dr Naresh Trehan, an Indian national, is a renowned Cardiovascular and Cardiothoracic surgeon, a graduate from King George Medical College and subsequently trained and practiced at New York University Medical Center Manhattan USA from 1971 to 1988, where he became a Diplomate of the American Board of Surgery and the American Board of Cardiothoracic Surgery.

He is the Chairman & Managing Director and Chief Cardiac Surgeon, Medanta- The Medicity, a 1500 bedded multi super speciality institute, which offers cutting-edge technology and state of art treatment facilities at an affordable cost. The Institute is governed under the guiding principles of providing medical services to patients with care, compassion, and commitment.

He founded the Escorts Heart Institute and Research Centre where he was the Executive Director. Escorts was conceptualised, created, and managed by Dr Trehan from November 1987 to May 2007.

He has received many prestigious awards, including the Padma Shree and the Padma Bhushan Award, presented by the Government of India.

He was the President of the International Society for Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery (ISMICS), Minneapolis, USA 2004- 05 and has also received Honorary Doctorate Degrees from three prestigious universities.

CII – Suresh Neotia Centre of Excellence for Leadership

The CII - Suresh Neotia Centre of Excellence for Leadership (CII-SNCEL) is a part of CII's integrated agenda of building competitiveness through Centres of Excellence (COE). CII-SNCEL is one of the 12 COEs which CII had set up set up for enhancing internal competitiveness of business and Industry through a diverse range of services including 'Logistics', 'Quality', 'Sustainable Development', 'Manufacturing Competitiveness', 'SME Competitiveness', 'Green Businesses', 'Food and Agriculture' and 'Water'; Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Startups, among others.

The Centre was set up by CII on the basis of its core belief that the "quality of leadership" will play a key role in enabling India to succeed in its Mission for inclusive growth and competitiveness and claim its rightful position in the global arena. Established in the year 2009, the Centre is aiming to become a key facilitator of leadership development not only amongst businesses and Industry but also amongst the general ecosystem through a diverse and comprehensive range of services.

Sharing of vision, thoughts, and perspectives of eminent Industry practitioners is one of the important areas of activities of this Centre, which imbibes leadership best practices within organisations. This thrust has led to the creation of a bouquet of widely successful and appreciated knowledge dissemination interventions that are regularly organized by the Centre, which include Long Duration Evaluation-based Certified Learning Journeys and capacity building interventions, including Masterclasses (Physical as well as Virtual), Strategy Sessions, Knowledge Platforms, Leadership Dialogues, HR Awards, and Assessments.

CII

Confederation of Indian Industry

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering Industry, Government and civil society through advisory and consultative processes.

For 130 years, CII has been engaged in shaping India's development journey and works proactively on transforming Indian Industry's engagement in national development. With its extensive network across the country and the world, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

In the journey of India's economic resurgence, CII facilitates the multifaceted contributions of the Indian Industry, charting a path towards a prosperous and sustainable future. With this backdrop, CII has identified "Accelerating Competitiveness: Globalisation, Inclusivity, Sustainability, Trust" as its theme for 2025-26, prioritising five key pillars. During the year, CII will align its initiatives to drive strategic action aimed at enhancing India's competitiveness by promoting global engagement, inclusive growth, sustainable practices, and a foundation of trust.

**Confederation of Indian Industry**

The Mantosh Sondhi Centre
23, Institutional Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi – 110 003 (India)
T: 91 11 45771000
E: info@cii.in • W: www.cii.in

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Reach us via CII Membership Helpline Number: 1800-103-1244