

# FULL OF FORESIGHT AND INSIGHT

BY ANAM KUMAR

*Some leaders are born; some grow to be leaders. Some have leadership traits in their blood, yet aspire for a greater grail, and in the process achieve more than the ordinary. Though **Mr. Yohan Poonawalla** was born in an industrialist family, and corporate nitty-gritty and fervor came naturally to him at a very young age, he continued to learn and work hard to create his own destiny*





## YOHAN POONAWALLA

**“TO BE A LEADER, YOU NEED TO FIRST HAVE THE BASIC CREDENTIALS AND MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS WHICH YOUR PEOPLE CAN LOOK UP TO”**

**T**here is no school in the world that can match the exposure and experience one gains doing practical groundwork,” says Yohan. The aspects he had to focus on to strengthen the natural impulse of his business acumen dawned upon him early in life. He also learnt early that tougher the conditions the better you are molded.

There were no exceptions for him in the initial years of his career before he took over as the Chairman & Managing Director of The Poonawalla Group of Engineering Companies. He rigorously took rounds down the shop floor and spent time in R&D to grasp as much as he could. Helping him in his zest to continue nurture the legendary Poonawalla legacy was another knack he learnt early – careful observation is the key to quick decisions. So, he observed the market, global economic changes, mechanical process cycle, mass tendencies and their general approach to economic changes and so on to identify opportunities, made quick and favorable decisions and applied them in his business strategies.

### **AVANT-GARDE TRAILBLAZER**

“If you wish to fly high, think differently, make innovative moves and take calculative risks,” shares Yohan. To further expand his conglomerate and make a mark in an individual capacity,

he diversified into the hospitality industry about 12 years ago by acquiring properties overseas, which have turned into prime estate and landmarks providing the best in the industry as making strategic real estate investments in India.

Of course, Horses are very close to the entire Poonawalla family's hearts and they are deeply bonded over their love for horses. They have not only achieved the title of the leading stud farm in the country, but have also made a mark globally in this industry. They have made thoroughbred history, as back to back In The Spotlight and her half-brother Mystical won at the Dubai Racing Carnival in 2007, Astonish won in Hong Kong, Adler in America and Simply Noble in Malaysia. Thus, the Poonawalla family has brought laurels to the Indian Horse Breeding Industry and our nation by consistently making history on international racing tracks.

### **SHARP AND VISIONARY**

“Leadership cannot be given, you have to earn it! To be a leader, you need to first have the basic credentials and major achievements which your people can look up to. You are a good leader if you can delegate the right assignments to the right people for which you need to have an eye for the qualities in a candidate and gauge his/her capabilities to execute responsibilities,” believes Yohan.

He further feels that one needs to establish oneself as a “man of the people” and ensure one's employees' prosperity and growth. He strongly believes in applying teamwork to successfully achieve dreams and visions as high as his. He further elaborates, “How do I motivate teamwork amongst my people and achieve my goals? Well, this is the area I personally monitor – from our HR policies to personal incentives, taking part in all major recruitments to supporting employee welfare programs.” Additionally, he feels that the other most important attribute in leadership is to demonstrate good values and integrity. All the Poonawallas strongly believe in implementing and practicing high ethical and moral values in all their business policies, and thus have set exemplary benchmarks since the inception of the Group. They take great pride in taking



forward their family legacy of great values and business philosophies passed on since generations, which Yohan and his wife Michelle Poonawalla look forward to inculcate in their children too.

#### **FULLFILLMENT IN PROFESSIONAL & PERSONAL LIFE**

"All good business investments give me a sense of contentment and an opportunity to expand further," Yohan shares.

Credit of a large part of his success undoubtedly goes to his wife Michelle who not only is his better half and the backbone of their family but also a superwoman when it comes to corporate decisions or major business acquisitions. Her flawless prowess in handling business ups and downs, her conviction and poise in advising and building corporate strategies, her penchant for designing their homes, factories or the farm, her exceptional skills as an artist which has now turned into a profession, her inclination for only the best, and the zeal with which she takes up all challenges, big and small, never fail to enthrall Yohan. "I am so glad that we make a great team and share similar business proficiency and acumen," he adds.

Complementing his professional growth, he is always

keen to learn from successful people who have achieved exceptional heights in the business world and have made a mark in the society. He admires eminent business personalities who believe in ethical business practices and in giving back to society.

#### **CLEAR AND LOFTY VISION**

He is committed to maximize customer satisfaction by consistently improving the quality of his products, services and delivery. He strives for the growth of his clients, employees, society and all his associates with Passion, Perfection and Performance. Passion to maintain leadership in everything he does, Perfection in what he promises and Performance in what he produces.

He continuously works towards growing his product range and his aim is to be a "One Stop Solution" in the Valve Automation Industry. To achieve his vision, he has strengthened his manufacturing and supplier base with self-certification. His products and manufacturing processes conform to international standards and have been qualified with numerous Indian and international certifications with exports to 46 countries.

#### **BACK TO THE SOCIETY**

For Yohan Poonawalla, corporate social responsibility is "most important! And we walk the talk!"

Be it medical aid or education for the underprivileged, creating gardens or infrastructure for the city, or making concerted efforts for the beautification of the society, Yohan takes a personal and professional interest.

The Poonawalla Group supports several Corporate Social Responsibility activities such as providing gainful employment to the Poona Leprosy Committee since 1990, thus playing an important role in almost eradicating the disease which is in play to date. Further, it donates towards "Zavaray Poonawalla Cancer Building" at the Ruby Hall Hospital, and for the beautifying and maintaining of "The Gool Poonawalla Garden". It has also sponsored and has taken active participation in the construction of the Soli Poonawalla Road in Hadapsar and in promoting English-medium education at the "Soli Poonawalla Memorial High School".