

News monitored for: Dr. Reddys

# OUTLOOK Business



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## 84 EFFECTIVE METHOD

Use my model, there is no patent.

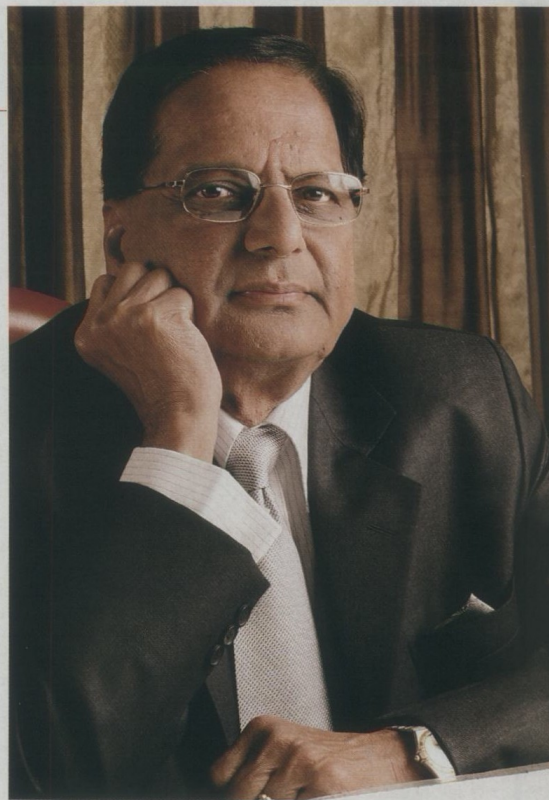
*Anji Reddy*

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THE RESPONSIBLE WAY



“ If other corporates really have the intent to solve the problems, they can take the model from me and scale it up ”

Starting out as an employee of the state-owned Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals in 1969, **K ANJI REDDY** is known today not only as the Founder Chairman of Dr Reddy's Laboratories but also for his work as the Chairman of Naandi Foundation and Dr Reddy's Foundation— institutions that have done commendable social work. He shared with **NANDITA DATTA** his approach to giving. Excerpts:

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**Where does your philanthropic urge spring from?**

**Was it inborn or did it evolve with time?**

I think it was within me. About 20-25 years back when starting work, you probably said you want an air-conditioned car, a nice house.... But after amassing, say, ₹50 crore or even ₹10 crore, what the hell do you do with the remaining money?

**What prompted you to start the Dr Reddy's Foundation?**

In the 50th year of Independence, on August 15, 1997, CII asked 50 people from across the country to write a note on what we have achieved so far, what we want to achieve, can achieve and things like that. I remember I was almost late for the deadline. On the last day I was in Mauritius and I was reading *Newsweek*, which was describing parts of India like north Bihar as worse than sub-Saharan Africa. I was very angry. We considered Africa a very backward region. But here one of our own states was being compared to sub-Saharan Africa and labelled worse. That hurt. So I wrote in my piece that Dhirubhai Ambani has done all this, he has created wealth. I have also done it myself. We are all in our way becoming wealthy people and successful entrepreneurs, but what have we given back to society? Are we going to live in a country with situations like this (parts of the country are like sub-Saharan Africa)? This was one of the reasons why I started the foundation.

**How did you zero in on the focus of the foundation?**

We first tried to work on sanitation and other areas. The major breakthrough came when a year later I was speaking with my CEO, Nalini Gangadhar, who had joined us from Ashoka Foundation. I told her I came to Hyderabad for a 4-figure salary, for my livelihood and now, when I am worth a few hundred crores, I need to start something. We needed to calculate the number of people for whom we can provide livelihood of at least ₹2,000 a month. We needed to understand what we can do about it. One thing led to another and finally we established Labs (Livelihood Advancement Business School).

As most of the boys came from slums, we created a clothes bank and gave them clean clothes and shoes. We built up their confidence, asked them to speak in English, not Telugu. And within three to six months they were leaving LABS with lots of confidence. We got support from BPL, Godrej, Allwyn and many of their managers came and trained the boys for the needed skills. The funny thing was that some boys trained by Godrej people would go and join BPL as it was paying more. I enjoyed it. My target was to create employment for a million people by 2010. Today LABS alone has created some 270,000 jobs and with a government arm another about 700,000. Seeing how LABS has transformed the lives of so many people who had little hope has been my greatest satisfaction.

**You already had Dr Reddy's Foundation, then why Naandi Foundation?**

About 10 years ago, former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu came out with a grand vision and the

Telugu people in the US said that if only there was a credible foundation, they would like to donate money to the state. He immediately decided to set up a foundation and appointed me as its chairman. It was a unilateral decision. I tried to object as I already had a foundation and had to earn my salary from business. But he insisted. So now I have to try and do justice to my job. That is Naandi Foundation.

**You head two foundations with large scale. Scaling up social initiatives is a big issue for many. What is the big secret?**

I empower and delegate and give people the freedom to work. But I am very careful in selecting the people. Also I am able to create that itch for giving back to society in the people who work with me. Several good people have come and joined us and worked with us.

**We believe you employ close to a thousand people in your foundation and you have created a very performance-oriented culture. How has this been achieved?**

That's because I have no tolerance level for people who just talk. There must be delivery. Also, at the end of the day it is all measurable, all that we are doing. The number of jobs you

People should give because they wish to, not out of compulsion. Rockefeller did not give because Washington pushed him.

have created is measurable; the amount of water you are able to provide is measurable.

**Do you think setting up foundations with professional CEOs at the helm is the way for other corporates to go?**

I don't know about that. But whatever I have done, for example, serving clean drinking water to 2 million people, is not a joke. With the resources, we can take it to 1 billion people.

**But how would you suggest businesses approach the subject?**

As I told you, Dr Reddy's Foundation has created livelihood for 270,000 people. But we are not in this alone. There are many mid-sized corporates who have joined hands with us across the country. Besides, if they really have the intent to solve the problems, they can take the model from me and scale it up. I don't claim any patent. They can show it in their books as their project, their contribution. For instance, Mahindra Pride School's LABS model has come from us. They are calling it Mahindra Pride School. So like that, let it spread.

**The government has been talking about regulation for CSR. Do you think something of this nature is required?**

I don't think so. If such a noble objective is tied up in government control it will be a shame. People can even manipulate to show results. People should give because they wish to, not out of compulsion. Rockefeller did not give because George Washington pushed him. ■