

INDIA'S
BEST
CEOs

Effortless Navigator

G.V. Prasad understands both the big picture and the tiniest operational detail. By E. KUMAR SHARMA

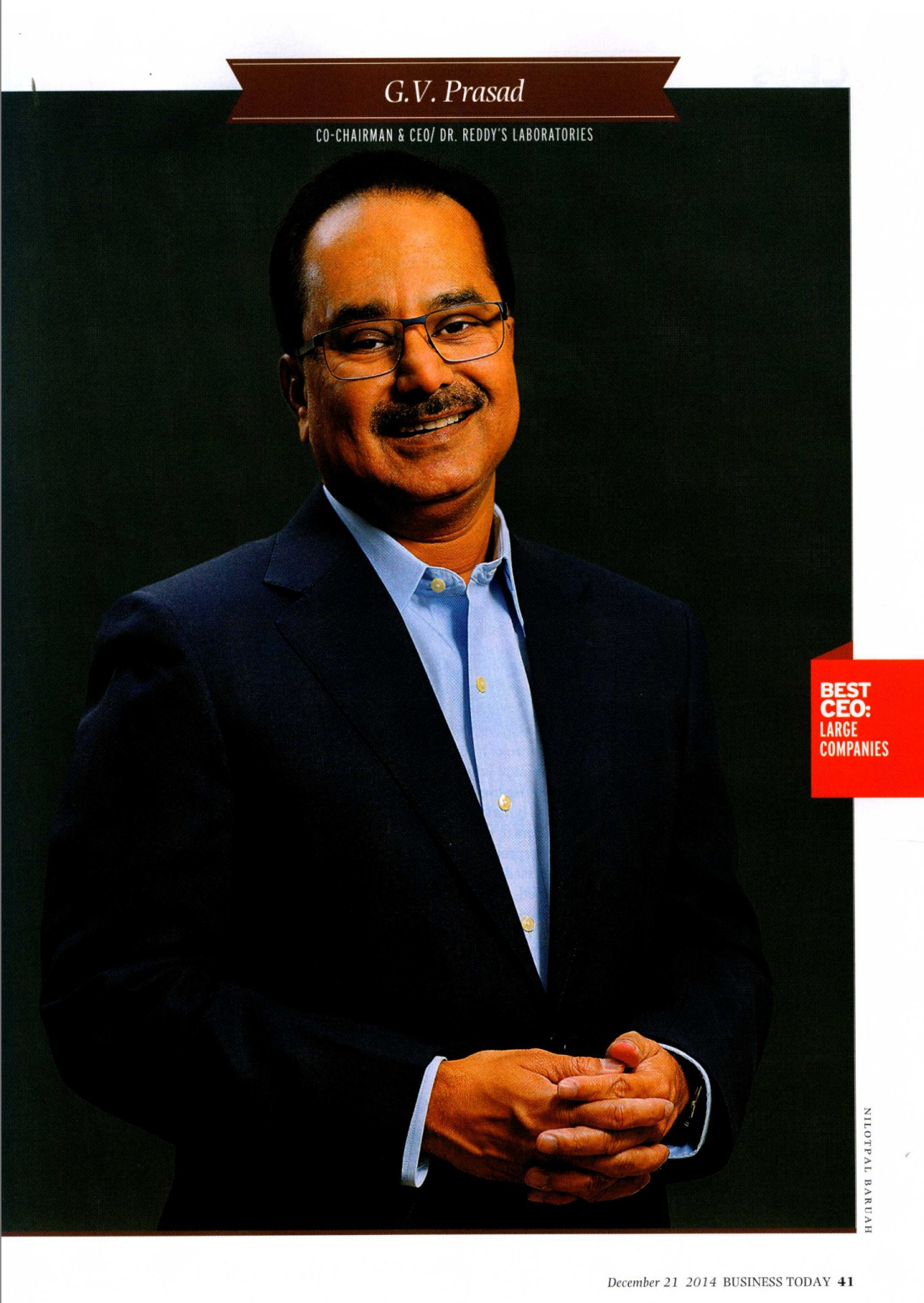
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e is just back from the Sundarbans with a host of pictures of the world's largest tidal halophytic mangrove forest, taken with his new Canon 5D Mark III camera. G.V. Prasad, Co-Chairman and CEO of the \$2.2-billion Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, has been a passionate wildlife and nature photographer for nearly a

decade. He says viewing the world through camera lenses also helps in running his business and engaging with people. "I've learnt to notice people's different dimensions," he says. "I prefer multi-dimensional people to uni-dimensional ones. The former have more to offer to the people around them, because the more diverse things you do, the richer you are in terms of experiences."

At work Prasad can take both the wide-angle and the close-up view – different mentors taught him the value of each. From his father-in-law and founder of Dr. Reddy's Labs, Kallam Anji Reddy, he learnt the first: from his own father G. Harishchandra Reddy, the second. "Anji Reddy was a visionary who looked at the big picture," he says. "From him I learnt to see the forest, while from my father, who was detail oriented, I

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G.V. Prasad
CO-CHAIRMAN & CEO/ DR. REDDY'S LABORATORIES

**BEST
CEO:
LARGE
COMPANIES**

NILOTPAL BARUAH

December 21 2014 BUSINESS TODAY 41

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learnt to see the trees." Dr. Reddy's Labs Chairman and Anji Reddy's son, K. Satish Reddy, agrees. "What I admire about Prasad is his uncanny ability to navigate effortlessly from a high level strategic thought right down to an operational detail," he says.

It is also what sets the two apart. "Satish is not a person who probes too much," says Prasad. "He assesses people and then empowers them. But I get into details. Anyone in the company will tell you that people need to come fully prepared to meetings with me because I can ask any question." The Chairman and CEO complement each other. "We have a good understanding of what is good for the company and we keep that foremost at all times," says Satish Reddy. What happens when differences arise? "Differences in strategy or on business issues may arise but we sort them out keeping in mind what is best for Dr. Reddy's," adds Prasad.

Prasad returned to India from the US in 1983 with a Master's degree in industrial administration from Purdue University and joined his family's construction business. Two years later, as he was branching out on his own to set up a bulk

SINCE WHEN
Co-Chairman since March 2013; CEO since 2001

PREVIOUS JOB/ DESIGNATION
Managing Director at Cheminor Drugs from 1990 to 2001

CURRENT SALARY; CHANGE IN 3 YEARS
₹10.94 crore; 34% increase

TOTAL SHAREHOLDER RETURN (3 YEARS)
63%

drugs' manufacturing company, Benzex Labs, he met Anji Reddy one evening at the house of a friend of his father's. Anji Reddy had set up his facility a year earlier on the same Hyderabad street as his own unit. Anji Reddy appeared to take an instant liking to Prasad and that very year, married his daughter Anuradha to him! In 1987 Dr. Reddy's Labs acquired Benzex and Prasad went back to his family business. In 1990, however, Anji Reddy suggested Prasad join him, and he agreed. "I didn't think of

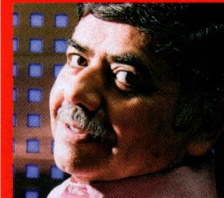
it as joining my father-in-law's business," he says. "Anji Reddy treated me as a professional and I behaved like one."

Prasad confirms that Anji Reddy was more of a scientist than a businessman to whom original research was more important than his company's balance sheets, which he left to others to take care of. But there is a widespread view that even before he passed away, Dr. Reddy's had stopped pursuing basic research with the same zeal as before, moving more towards research in select, complex generics which have limited competition. Prasad denies it, noting that Dr. Reddy's still puts around 10 per cent of its sales value into research and development. "We

"I find him a very thoughtful individual who, in his humble and quiet way, has been extremely effective"

Y.K. Hamied/ Chairman/ Cipla

THE OTHER
NOMINEES:
LARGE COMPANIES



Bhaskar Bhat,
Titan Company



Keki Mistry,
HDFC



K.M. Mammen,
MRF



O.P. Puranmalka,
UltraTech Cement

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are also doing some interesting work at Aurigene," he says. Aurigene is a Dr. Reddy's subsidiary engaged in discovery services, with centres in Hyderabad and Bangalore. "Here we have gone beyond generics and are working on proprietary products which will morph into discoveries if they reach their logical conclusion. We will then be known for our innovation."

Prasad rises at 5 a.m. daily to give himself sufficient time for reading and a workout at his private gym. He is a voracious reader. "I don't read only management books," he says. "I'm very interested in his-



ness. The non violence concept, too, has great meaning. Violence need not always be physical. It can be verbal and is even implicit when people play politics." Apart from Gandhi, another idol is Steve Jobs. "Who would not admire him?" he says. "Everyone has flaws but there was something magical about Jobs. He had some very strong beliefs which he held on to, pursued, and changed the world."

With Apple's former CEO as his model, what abilities and qualities does he think a CEO in a pharmaceutical company should have? "The pharma business is complex, so he or she must have the ability to deal with complex-

change with the situation. There are some people who have to be told what to do. There are some I can inspire and liberate and some who I need to work alongside." The primary focus remains the greater glory of Dr. Reddy's Labs. "I want Dr. Reddy's to become a global force in the world of pharma. I don't think we are there yet. What we do should matter to the world."

Prasad is respected across the industry. "I find him a very thoughtful individual who, in his humble and quiet way, has been extremely effective," says Y.K. Hamied, Chairman, Cipla, who used to know Anji Reddy as well.

Prasad's long-term vision is apparent from the fact that he is already looking for a successor. "I have to replace myself in the next few years and find the best guy to lead this company from revenues of \$3 billion to \$10 billion," he says. "I need a guy who can think \$10 billion and bat at that level. He should be entrepreneurial enough to see Dr. Reddy's possibilities and build on them. He should have the capacity to make his own plans and not depend on briefs from us."

Apart from the pursuit of photography, Prasad has been, to use his own expression, adding new layers to his personality too. There was a time, in the pre-photography years, when he was himself focused purely on his work. Today, his interest in people in general is much more than before, including the people Dr. Reddy's hires. Often, he gets actively involved in the hiring process. To his love of history and wildlife, he has added education, and is on the boards of the Indian School of Business, the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad and Dr. Reddy's Institute of Life Sciences. ♦

@EKumarSharma

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K. Satish Reddy / Chairman/ Dr. Reddy's Labs

tory." Lately audio books have also caught his fancy and he is currently listening to *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* by Jack Weatherford. He finds Genghis Khan, who started with a small tribe on the steppes of Mongolia and went on to conquer a fair portion of the world, amazing.

But the book that has influenced him the most is perhaps Keshavan Nair's *A Higher Standard of Leadership: Lessons from the Life of Gandhi*. "It explains Gandhi's philosophy in a very simple way," he says. "What Gandhi says about truth and integrity is very relevant for people like us who are in busi-

ness," he says. "Each geographical location has its own rules; each country has its own legislative process. A CEO needs to reduce the complexity of the environment for his team and make it meaningful to the members." Equally important is a fascination with the sector. "Anji Reddy used to say discovering medicines is like playing God," he adds. "A pharma CEO must be inspired by health care and want to make a difference."

His leadership style varies according to need. "I prefer a collaborative style," he says. "I like people who are smart and competent, who do not need to be guided. But I can