

## LAKSHMI CHAND JAIN

LAKSHMI CHAND JAIN descends, on his father's side, from the Motiparik clan of Jains, long ensconced in the mercantile district of Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi. Young LAKSHMI spent much of his childhood there, learning to navigate its shop-crammed streets and walkways as he made his way among the homes and establishments of his paternal relatives, most of whom were jewel merchants, although his father, Phool Chand Jain, was a newspaperman.

But he was not wholly a child of the city. His mother, Chameli Devi Sancheti, hailed from the princely state of Rajasthan where her Jain family prospered as merchants in and around the town of Alwar. Her native village was Bahadurpur, some twenty miles outside Alwar and roughly 120 miles from Delhi. There LAKSHMI was born on 13 December 1925, the first of four siblings. He was named SANTOSH, but when his sister, Lakshmi, died as a child, he was given her name and has borne it ever since.

Journalism was not the usual profession for Jains, and LAKSHMI's father had actually apprenticed in the jewelry trade. His switch to journalism was coincident with his commitment to the idea of Indian independence from Britain. Phool Chand had become a passionate follower of India's legendary freedom fighter and apostle of nonviolence, Mohandas K. Gandhi, and a stalwart of the Delhi branch of the Congress Party. In 1929, while attending a meeting where Gandhi was speaking, he was arrested and sent to jail. It happened that his cellmate was editor of a Hindi-language newspaper who, when they were later released, took on Phool Chand as a reporter.

Phool Chand persevered in this career, writing not only for the Indian vernacular press but also as a stringer for the international news services, Associated Press and Reuters. Being a newspaperman kept him constantly abreast of political activities in the capital, activities in which he became a key actor himself. Indeed, for some seventeen years Phool Chand was general secretary of the Delhi branch of the Congress Party.

Young LAKSHMI, therefore, grew up quite close to the center of India's independence movement. He recalls that as a boy of six he accompanied his father to a chilly dawn meeting with Gandhi. The great Mahatma scolded Phool Chand for having brought such a little child out in the cold, covered the boy with a shawl, and offered him dried fruits and nuts. On another occasion, lost in a crowd waiting to hear Jawaharlal Nehru—a Congress Party leader who later became the first prime minister of an independent India—LAKSHMI was rescued by Nehru himself, who lifted him above the crowd and bore him safely to his father. When slightly older, LAKSHMI and his friends would sit at the edge of the stage during Congress Party rallies, viewing the leaders close-up and applauding wildly as they announced each new demand.

However, there was a grim side to these events. Being a Congress Party leader, LAKSHMI's father attracted the ire of the British authorities and went to jail for his political activities on six separate occasions. He used these periods of incarceration to study English. Moreover, some within his own family scorned Phool Chand's political attitudes; at one point his father and brother beat him for having set up a "subversive" library.

LAKSHMI's mother, Chameli Devi, also broke with her family to enter the freedom movement. Within Jain society, women were considered the guardians of ritual and tradition, including the intricate food taboos. While Jain men engaged in the larger world, women were expected to be active within the community. Distinctive clothing set them apart from the sari-clad Hindu women; when in public, they were completely covered by a *burkah* (outer garment) and always escorted by male relatives.

In February 1932, Chameli Devi defied her family by donning a handspun cotton sari (a mark of the Congress Party) and, with head uncovered, marched with other women protesters to picket shops selling foreign goods in the main bazaar. She was arrested and sent to Delhi Central Jail. This caused an uproar among her conservative relatives, some of whom came from Bahadurpur and "raved and abused Phool Chand's family for putting their princess in jail!" But Chameli Devi found allies in her husband and her mother-in-law. They honored the spirit of her *satyagraha* (nonviolent protest) by refusing to pay the government's fine for her release. Several months later she returned home a heroine. Subsequently, she gave away her fine clothes and ornaments and adhered strictly to Gandhi's message of simplicity. She devoted herself to family duties—which reconciled her to her angry relatives—and to a variety of women's causes, including crusades against child marriages and the custom that forbade widows to remarry.

The busy and turbulent life of his politically active parents did not disrupt LAKSHMI JAIN's childhood because he grew up in a traditional family. According to custom, on a day-to-day basis he, his siblings, and cousins were raised not by their parents but by their paternal grandparents. Family life was highly disciplined under the stern authority of his grandfather. At night, however, the cousins all slept on their grandparents' huge bed, quarreling over the coveted places under the quilt next to one grandparent or the other.

In Delhi the Jain community had established its own schools, in part to preserve the Jain identity at a time when British influence was at its peak. Beginning in 1929, young JAIN attended the Shri Mahavir Jain primary and secondary schools. Although run by the community, these private schools had such a reputation for academic excellence that Muslim and Hindu boys enrolled too. Discipline was severe, and scholarship recipients like JAIN were sometimes made to feel like second-class students. JAIN still remembers the shame of having to identify himself by standing up when daily refreshments were distributed; as a "free-fee" student he was entitled to none. But he was a bright boy and graduated at the head of his class.

It was during the long holidays from school that JAIN became acquainted with his mother's clan, the Sanchetis. For many years his maternal grandfather would arrive from the countryside on the very day school was over and take him by train to Alwar. There a bullock or camel cart would be waiting for them, or young JAIN would ride on horseback with one of his uncles. In and around this rural village, handloom weavers made turbans that were sold all over India; the Sanchetis were involved in this prosperous trade.

Locally the family was prominent and occupied a many-roomed stone house. Food was abundant, especially in contrast to the austere larder of JAIN's family in Delhi. Water in the area, however, was scarce and carefully rationed. Despite the high station of the Sanchetis, there were no household servants. Self-sufficiency in daily life was part of the Jain tradition, and in both his mother's and father's families this was adhered to strictly. The boy was expected to sweep his room upon rising and to wash his own clothes.

Of his Rajasthan uncles, he liked and admired Rattan Chand the most. It was Rattan Chand who took JAIN under his wing during his holiday visits to the village. The titular head of the family and a force for progress in rural Rajasthan, Rattan Chand set up Bahadurpur's first public library (based on the one started by JAIN's father in Delhi) and a night school to help villagers learn to read. Endeavors like these made him a public figure and a magnet for young people. Through him

JAIN saw the village world awakening slowly to modernity. JAIN played his own small part by regaling his country cousins with tales of city life. Even though Bahadurpur had a mixed population of Muslims, Hindus, and Jains, he remembers no religious discord during his childhood visits. Rather, he found among his family's close friends Muslim merchants and artisans.

The 1947 partition of the subcontinent into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan changed Bahadurpur and was a pivotal event in JAIN's own life. Communal riots broke out and, for safety, the Sanchetis moved to Alwar and eventually settled there permanently. JAIN has not been back to his mother's village for over thirty years.

JAIN entered Hindu College, a division of Delhi University, in 1939. As a superior student he once again qualified for a scholarship. Initially he took the course leading to a medical degree but, after two years, turned from science to the study of history and philosophy. His grasp of practical economics—for which he is now so admired—is a product of practical experience, a summer course at Harvard University in 1955, and the informal tutelage of his Oxford-educated wife, Devaki.

In many ways, JAIN's university education was overtaken by larger events. With the outbreak of World War II, Indians demanded independence in return for cooperation with Britain. The British countered with an offer of postwar dominion status. In August 1942, Gandhi called upon the British to "quit India" and urged his followers to pursue a policy of strict noncooperation with the war effort. He and senior colleagues in the Congress Party—including JAIN's father—were immediately arrested. JAIN himself joined other student nationalists in the anti-British underground, where he took a hand in insurgent activities designed to destabilize the colonial government: organizing protests, writing and distributing subversive publications, cutting telephone and power lines, and sowing panic by detonating homemade bombs. As a courier, he played a vital role in linking one sector of the underground to another and forged associations with like-minded patriots that would endure well beyond the years of struggle. His underground code name was SANTOSH.

Amid these activities, and what formal studies they managed to squeeze in, JAIN and some fellow student activists formed the Changers, a society that debated the future of India. "When the British depart at last," they asked themselves, "what will be the shape of Indian society? What will we make of our opportunity?" Virtually all the Changers considered themselves socialists. But, JAIN explains, although they were inspired by various schools of thought, their political ideas were never coherent enough for them to align with any one movement. For

example, they studied Marxism's failures as well as its successes, all the while attempting to reconcile its goals with those of Gandhi.

For JAIN this period of urgent political and intellectual activity coincided with a phase of personal rebellion. He broke with his family after refusing to marry a woman selected for him by his paternal grandfather. He took up smoking and drinking. Egged on by friends, he also abandoned the Jain dietary code and ate meat. The latter, however, was short-lived as he did not really enjoy nonvegetarian food. Besides, he says, "after a year or so I couldn't figure out why it was all that necessary to break the rules." He has since adhered to Jain practices, not because of Jainism but "just as second nature."

At the end of World War II, both Gandhi and JAIN's father were released from prison, and the Congress Party began addressing the complex issues arising from impending independence. A provisional government under a British viceroy, but with Jawaharlal Nehru as vice-president, was set up the following year. JAIN had finished his baccalaureate by this time and was studying for a master's degree in history. As vice-president for Delhi of the Congress Party's student branch, he spoke out at political rallies and mobilized students for mass action. He also volunteered to help organize the Asia Relations Conference in India, a brainchild of Nehru that sought to gather the leaders of the independence movements in Asia's newly emerging states. India's great woman poet, Sarojini Naidu, chaired the conference, while JAIN and fourteen other veterans of the student movement took on the immense logistical task of "bringing it off."

JAIN was in charge of providing accommodations, transportation, seminar rooms, and other physical arrangements for the 260 foreign delegates and thousands of Indian participants. This exhausting responsibility occupied him day and night for nearly eight months, but it paid off in unique opportunities to meet Asia's new leaders, including Chou En-lai of China and Ho Chih Minh of Vietnam, whom JAIN greeted personally at the airport. His prior experience in underground activities came in handy when Indonesia's delegate, Sutan Sjahrir, had to be flown in secretly because the Dutch, who were opposed to Indonesian independence, refused him permission to attend. The conference looked at the possibilities for regional cooperation. "We were rebuilding our life after the end of colonial power," says JAIN, "and exploring the ways in which we could look at each other and take sustenance and support from each other. The exciting thing was the knowledge it brought to India of Asia even before our formal freedom came."

On 14 August 1947, only a few months after the Asia Relations Conference, formal independence came to India and with it the horrors of partition. JAIN had spent the summer months organizing a library for the Indian Council on World Affairs in anticipation of returning to his academic program at Delhi University. But as northern India erupted in communal violence, and millions of Hindus and Muslims pulled up stakes to flee in terror from their former neighbors, his priorities changed. He gave up any idea of returning to the university and began to help set up refugee camps and relief organizations.

JAIN soon found himself chief administrator of the Hudson Lines Refugee Camp, population: ten thousand. In this endeavor he received a small honorarium of 150 rupees per month. He took charge in the midst of an internal crisis. The former camp leader, a Hindu refugee from Pakistan, had been implicated in the murder of a Muslim and dismissed on the same day that Gandhi called for an end to communal violence.

On his first night at the camp, ten stone-throwing youths (supporters of the ousted camp head) demonstrated outside JAIN's makeshift lodgings. As his fellow volunteers urged him to call in the police, JAIN asked himself, "What would Gandhi do?" Consequently, he waited out the demonstration and the next day went from barrack to barrack urging the occupants of each to elect representatives to a council to discuss the problem. Before the representatives could meet, however, the boys locked one of the camp kitchens and defied anyone to serve the waiting food. Outraged, the women soon broke the lock, and that evening the camp voted unanimously to expel the boys.

But still JAIN hesitated and again asked himself, "What would Gandhi do?" He reminded the meeting that these boys were refugees and part of the camp. It would look bad to admit that the camp could not control them and was sending such troublemakers elsewhere. Another method of dealing with the situation should be found. The leaders agreed to sleep on it. That night came a knock at JAIN's door. A group of contrite young men entered to thank him for not expelling them and assured him of their good behavior henceforth. JAIN tells this story to illustrate how Gandhi became a reference point for him. Since then he has always attempted to use Gandhi's humane approach in resolving difficult situations.

JAIN realized that many of the camp's residents had suffered unspeakable losses. He therefore made the slender resources of the camp available for activities that, narrowly construed, might have been considered luxuries. For example, when people approached him about arranging proper wedding ceremonies for their daughters and sons,

he happily provided tents and food for the festivities. Like Gandhi, he also learned to mobilize peer pressure for the good. When a caste-conscious dentist came to him outraged at having to share accommodations with sweepers and scavengers, JAIN referred him to his barrack committee. There the man's own wife rose and rebuked him by saying, "God has brought tragedy on all of us. So who are we now to say who is the doctor and who is the sweeper?"

In addition, JAIN appointed himself chief sanitation inspector of the camp and initiated a system wherein a woman from every barrack was elected to be responsible for its cleanliness. She was called *safai-ki-mai* (mother in charge of cleaning) and her name was posted prominently. Then he taught the little children to inspect the barrack grounds as they passed on the way to school, and to stop and sing out "*safai-ki-mai-gandi*" (dirty) if the grounds had not been swept. The chant, issuing from the mouths of the young, became a powerful force in keeping the compound clean.

Helping JAIN at Hudson Lines Camp were volunteers from Delhi University, students whose formal education had been interrupted by the turmoil of partition and who had been promised graduation in return for three months of social work. The administrators of other camps were reluctant to accept student volunteers, considering them disruptive, but JAIN saw their potential. He took in five hundred and challenged them to devise their own contributions. Several dozen raised funds from the outside and set up a radio station; some threw themselves into health care, others into a cleanliness campaign. Still others taught in the camp's school system, with the result that Hudson Lines had four times the number of schools as other camps.

Lady Mountbatten, wife of British Viceroy Lord Louis Mountbatten, so admired the vitality and peacefulness of JAIN's camp—in contrast to the violence and hostility she witnessed in others—that she persuaded Prime Minister Nehru to visit it. JAIN refused to receive Nehru unless his police escort remained outside the camp gates; he and the camp residents themselves would guarantee Nehru's safety. Nehru was so impressed with the camp's spirit and its elected representatives—who, at JAIN's suggestion, asked how they could help him—that he was moved to tears. As he left, he said, "I want to bring Gandhi to this camp. He has been having such a rough time." But seven days later Gandhi was assassinated.

Toward the end of 1947, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay\* on a visit to the camp, shocked JAIN by asking of the refugees: "What is their

\*RMAF Awardee in Community Leadership, 1966.

future?" Their future, JAIN admits, had never entered his head. Thus, he and Chattopadhyay set about forming an organization to help people establish new lives outside the refugee camps. In 1948 they launched the Indian Cooperative Union. With the union's help, a group of refugees moved to open land, which JAIN and Chattopadhyay found for them. Here, in the village of Chattarpur, ten miles from Delhi, they began farming.

JAIN then left the Hudson Lines Camp to work with the union full-time. As its first public relations officer, he moved to Chattarpur with the pioneer farmers and for a year helped them to acquire seeds, fertilizer, water, and credit, as well as to sell their produce. Although he knew very little about these practical matters, he and the refugees learned together.

It was with some reluctance, therefore, that the following year he yielded to a request from the Government of India to manage another refugee camp, Faridabad, which housed some thirty thousand Pathans who had fled their Northwest Frontier homeland when it became part of Pakistan. The Pathans had been in the camp for about a year. Because of their warlike reputation, the government was especially keen that they be well looked after.

JAIN's first step as new manager was to press for removal of the army unit stationed in the camp. It was a source of humiliation to the proud refugees, who told him, "We are not conquered [people], we are citizens!" He convinced the government that he and the other camp officials would be perfectly safe without military support. The Pathans, he had found, did not fit the popular stereotype of a "ferocious, trigger-happy people."

Building upon his experience at Hudson Lines Camp, JAIN fostered the creation of an elected camp advisory board. Working closely with this body, he then began converting the tent camp of Faridabad into a genuine town. Although the government's original plans called for individual houses to be built, and several private contractors had already been engaged to do the work by the time he arrived, JAIN questioned the logic behind this. He asked, "Do you mean that these people will live here in tents and eat free food while contractors are building their town?" He insisted, instead, that the people be given a chance to build the town and, in the process, learn new economic skills. Only an order from Nehru overrode the objections of the phalanx of businessmen and bureaucrats who would have profited from the original scheme.



JAIN recruited a well-paid team of young civil engineers to assist with the project, while he took upon himself the task of allocating employment and training. Every man who wanted to work was hired. These men, numbering some five thousand, soon became skilled carpenters, bricklayers, foundry operators, blacksmiths, surveyors, and supervisors. They accomplished in one and a half years what the government had estimated would take five; in three years they built over four thousand homes, thirteen schools, ten health centers, a water supply system, a powerhouse, and a hospital. This new corps of skilled workers attracted industries to the area, which in turn provided further employment for the camp's inhabitants as the task of building the township was gradually completed. The government however, rejected JAIN's suggestion of developing worker-owned industries in Faridabad.

It was the cooperative union's policy not to leave anyone in one place for over three years, so JAIN now returned to union headquarters. Chattopadhyay was about to embark upon a countrywide campaign to revitalize Indian handicrafts and asked JAIN to conduct a comprehensive study of the industry. In so doing he traveled the length and breadth of India to learn directly from the artisans, immersing himself in the world of handwoven carpets, textiles and embroideries, toys, and a cornucopia of things made from wood, cotton, silk, ivory, brass, and silver. His objective was to understand forty different crafts and the problems facing each—of supply and demand, inputs and inventory, labor and marketing—and then to devise a policy to foster the industry as a whole. This investigative project took nearly two years, but when it was done the government accepted the union's plan of action and set up the Handicrafts Development Board (1955) to implement it. JAIN was persuaded to become the secretary; Chattopadhyay became chair. The goal: to foster handicraft production as a viable livelihood for millions of Indian artisans.

JAIN and his colleagues first undertook to stimulate a demand for handicrafts. The foreign market was seductive, but JAIN decided quickly that it alone could not be depended upon to sustain the industry. To increase the domestic market, therefore, he began to organize handicraft exhibitions, sending them from town to town throughout India. As this was underway, the prime minister transferred to the Indian Cooperative Union the government's floundering Cottage Industries Emporium in New Delhi. The bureaucrats who had been running it, says JAIN, "did not know what to buy, when to buy, or how to sell."

JAIN and Chattopadhyay made the emporium the centerpiece of their drive to promote handicrafts. They engaged in "social marketing" to find out why certain goods were not selling and then to overcome

the problems. For example, to help remote artisans get their goods to market, they proposed that the cost of shipping goods to the emporium be borne uniformly by all participants—near or far. When the advantage of proximity was removed, sales from distant areas immediately improved. At the same time, buyers from the emporium were trained to select items carefully; when they rejected goods, they were also instructed to help artisans improve or redesign them.

The Cottage Industries Emporium blossomed into a stunning national showcase under the cooperative union's direction. Soon it was widely imitated at the state level. JAIN refused to allow the union a direct hand in running the regional emporiums, although it could offer training and assistance. This action was consistent with his belief that it is government's role to "get the ball rolling" and then pull back in favor of local or private initiative. (The Cottage Industries Emporium itself was eventually separated from the Indian Cooperative Union.) Today each state has its own handicrafts emporium, each contributing to the vastly increased flow to the marketplace of handmade products from India's villages and towns.

The marketplace is now international, thanks largely to JAIN. After the domestic market was satisfactorily established, he turned his attention abroad. Working through the government's newly created Handloom and Handicrafts Exports Corporation, he placed Indian handicrafts before the eyes of potential distributors at trade fairs throughout Europe and North America. Recognizing that foreign buyers had often been vexed by unreliable quality and unpredictable delivery schedules, he set up warehouses stocked with Indian merchandise in key cities like Hamburg, New York, and Tokyo. This way importers could see exactly what they would be getting and could get it immediately. Using such strategies, JAIN and his team established a lucrative outlet for Indian merchants who had previously avoided the risky export market. Seeing its potential, they then set up their own offices abroad, which soon made the visits of official delegations redundant. "When Indian entrepreneurs entered the market, we started extricating ourselves," JAIN notes.

When JAIN and a longtime colleague, Raj Krishna, surveyed India's handicrafts in 1953 and 1954, India's total export of handicrafts was valued at approximately U.S.\$6 million. Today it is closer to U.S.\$2.5 billion. What is more, the number of individuals making their livelihoods from handicrafts has increased from fewer than 1 million in the mid-1950s to 3.5 million today. Although the union's handicrafts program was driven by the immediate need to assure livelihoods, it has had a broader impact. Today, large numbers of children once again find it economically attractive to learn traditional skills from their parents.

When JAIN speaks of his efforts in handicrafts development and the Indian Cooperative Union, he always stresses that these were team endeavors involving many people. Chattopadhyay, in particular, he says, was the “fountainhead of ideas”; his own role was merely “to translate these ideas into practical actions.” Theirs was a durable collaboration built upon mutual respect and common goals but, says JAIN, “she was the leader, I was the follower.”

JAIN tells a story to illustrate the point. In 1954 Jayaprakash Narayan\* invited him to spend some time at his ashram, the center of the Bhoodan Movement in the state of Bihar. Led by Narayan and Vinoba Bhave,\*\* the Bhoodan Movement urged wealthy landholders to share their lands with the landless by making *bhoodan* (gifts of land). In Bihar a good deal of land was donated, but practical problems arose over its distribution. Who should receive it? How should it be distributed? What records were required? How could the newly landed be helped in establishing sound economic lives? These were questions Narayan put to JAIN.

For a month, JAIN immersed himself in developing a blueprint to address these complex practical matters. He became so deeply involved that he resolved to take an extended leave from the union so that he could devote himself full-time to Bhoodan. Chattopadhyay invited him to dinner to discuss his leaving. As he was departing, she handed him the key to the union’s office. “Take this with you,” she said, adding that she would “lock up the premises until he returned.” “The work we are doing here,” he remembers her saying, “though small and unsung . . . is significant,” and his departure would interrupt it at a critical time. By the next morning, although his “feet were aching to go,” JAIN had decided not to leave. He remained with the union for another twelve years.

One of JAIN’s last projects at the union was also one of his most dramatic. Shortly after Indira Gandhi was appointed prime minister in 1966, she devalued India’s currency. Soon thereafter prices rose catastrophically. To help counter the political crisis this brought about, and to alleviate consumer woes in general, Mrs. Gandhi called upon JAIN for help. Although he had reservations about working with the government, JAIN agreed when he was assured of the prime minister’s total support. In the incredibly short time of fifteen days, he set up in New Delhi a huge consumer’s cooperative, the Super Bazaar, in whose eighteen thousand square feet of selling space customer-owners were offered good quality merchandise at discount prices.

\*RMAF Awardee in Public Service, 1965.

\*\*RMAF Awardee in Community Leadership, 1958.

In the bazaar, JAIN initiated the practice of monitoring prices on a daily basis. He also set up a testing laboratory and began the policy of spot-checking food items. Spoiled articles were removed and destroyed; the word spread quickly that "we were like watchdogs." Today there are some one hundred branches of the Super Bazaar in Delhi, with similar but autonomous chains in every state in the nation. In line with its beliefs, the cooperative union withdrew from the project once it was successfully launched.

The opening day of the Super Bazaar coincided with JAIN's marriage day. Mandyam Ananthpillai Alwar Devaki (Devaki, for short) was an Oxford University graduate and a Bhoodan activist, who met JAIN when she was briefly associated with the research division of the Cooperative Union ten years before. She had left the organization to aid Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist, in researching his book *Asian Drama*, and then returned to Oxford for graduate study. During this period, she and JAIN kept in touch by mail, and when she returned to India in 1962 they began discussing marriage. However, her high-caste Brahman family objected to the match, and a few years passed before she decided to forgo their approval. She and JAIN were finally wed on 16 March 1966 and subsequently blessed with two sons: Gophal Krishna in 1967 and Sreenidasan in 1969.

Up to the time of their marriage, JAIN had never held a regular paying job. Even his position as an officer of the cooperative union was essentially voluntary. His friends now took him aside and urged him to think seriously about his financial obligations, pointing out that he could no longer afford to be a professional volunteer. JAIN had no interest in government or business in the conventional sense, but the idea of forming a team of consultants to provide practical advice on development projects appealed to him. With the help of friends, who donated office space, secretarial services, and capital (five of them putting up ten thousand rupees each), he formed Industrial Development Services (IDS).

From the outset, IDS's small team of technocrats subjected themselves to a strict ethical code. They spurned lucrative opportunities as lobbyists for big business and carefully vetted the companies or agencies seeking their services. They also scrupulously avoided selling to one company the services or expertise developed for another. In time, IDS's reputation for integrity became its most important asset, what JAIN calls its "capital of confidence." JAIN also ensured that integrity was matched with technical competence. IDS insured its work with a money-back guarantee and built an impressive list of clients among government, industry, and international organizations. As executive director, JAIN devoted himself to the company for seven

years, but in 1975 political events drew him back into public life.

Indira Gandhi's declaration of an "emergency" on 26 June 1975 awakened JAIN and other veterans of India's independence movement to the possibility that various things they had struggled for were in jeopardy. "Many of us who had left active politics in 1947 to go into rehabilitation and reconstruction work had taken for granted that India's constitution, its politics, were in good hands." But when the fundamental rights they had fought for were threatened, they returned to do battle, adding their voices to the chorus of outrage over the prime minister's suspension of electoral processes and civil liberties as well as the arrest and detention of political opponents.

When the Emergency was lifted in January 1977 and upcoming parliamentary elections were announced, JAIN wrote to hundreds of friends and acquaintances begging them to participate. Several of Mrs. Gandhi's opponents formed the Janata Party to contest the ruling party in the election. JAIN joined with like-minded intellectuals such as Raj Krishna, George Verghese,\* and Arun Shourie\*\* to form the brain trust that prepared Janata's political manifesto and helped articulate its mission and goals. He also volunteered at Janata's national headquarters and prepared meticulous and thoughtful briefing papers for the party leaders who faced daily press conferences.

For JAIN the key issue was freedom itself. The argument was being made by Janata's opponents that for poor people political freedom is far less important than other basic needs, and delivering the latter should be the government's priority. JAIN rejected this "sinister philosophy" because he knew from experience that without the freedom to assert themselves politically, the poor rarely received the benefits earmarked for them by the government. One way or another, those who already enjoyed wealth and power managed to take the lion's share. "The only weapon the poor have to resist oppression and injustice is an environment of freedom," he insisted. He also emphasized that civil liberties are fundamental rights. These ideas became a key theme in the Janata campaign as it moved toward electoral victory.

In 1977, following Janata's victory, JAIN withdrew again to private life and the work of IDS. He officially transferred the company's executive directorship to one of his colleagues and became the "consultant to the consultants." But at Chattopadhyay's urging, he accepted the chairmanship of the National Handicrafts Board as well as a position on the State Planning Commission of Uttar Pradesh.

\*RMAF Awardee in Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts, 1975.

\*\*RMAF Awardee in Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts, 1982.

True to its mandate during its two and a half years in office, Janata restored fundamental liberties and embarked upon programs of development, emphasizing village-level voluntary associations, cottage industries, and the enfranchisement of the poor. JAIN made essential contributions to these programs. As head of the handicrafts board, for example, he directed a training program involving a hundred thousand rural carpet weavers, and as a member of Uttar Pradesh's planning commission he helped launch a development project reaching half a million of the state's poorest families.

Mahatma Gandhi had used the expression *antyodaya* (to the last man first) to remind his followers that their efforts to improve living standards should begin with the neediest. From his many years in rural development work, JAIN knew that the government's Community Development Program had not reached the truly poor, and his recent survey of seven hundred Uttar Pradesh villages bore this out. Among the thirty-five hundred poorest-of-the-poor families in these villages, the average per capita income was one-fifth the average for the rural population at large; family breadwinners were employed less than two hundred days a year, and they and their families literally starved if there was no work for three consecutive days. Yet, JAIN reported, "not one family had received any development assistance since independence from any government or nongovernment agency!"

From his wife, JAIN learned about an experiment in the state of Rajasthan where former Bhoodan activists in the Janata-dominated government were working out a practical application of the *antyodaya* concept. He studied the program in Rajasthan and then began promoting it in Uttar Pradesh, first by talking about it widely around the state, then by patiently working out the details with the State Planning Commission. His scheme was designed to reach the five poorest families in each of Uttar Pradesh's one hundred thousand villages. He calculated that the sum of 1,500 rupees would, on the average, raise the annual incomes of these families by 150 percent. "This may not still be enough for them to cross the poverty line," he wrote, "but they are content to take only one step at a time." JAIN also noted that the vast majority of the poorest families sought assistance in self-employment. For example, an elderly woman with a paralytic husband told *antyodaya* workers: "Give us two goats. I will feed [my husband] with the milk of one and sell the milk of the other to repay the loan. When the goat breeds I will repay the debt faster."

In the poor people of Uttar Pradesh, JAIN found the same resilience he had found among the residents of his refugee camps some thirty years before. This confirmed his belief that, given the wherewithal and opportunity, poor people are the best masters of their own destinies.

His program in Uttar Pradesh, therefore, emphasized not only the maximum possible assistance to the state's poorest families but the decentralization of its delivery. If "the last man" is to lift himself from poverty, JAIN concluded, he must have some control over the process whereby the state attempts to help him. He believed that key decisions in every development program—agriculture, irrigation, drainage, animal husbandry, fishing, forestry, cottage industry—should be made not in the state capital but in district planning committees. These committees should consult, in turn, with the field workers involved directly with implementing such programs in the villages where popular councils called *panchayats* would give the individual beneficiary a voice in the process. JAIN's long experience in refugee rehabilitation, the cooperative movement, cottage industries, and development planning had taught him, "if you empower the people and put the responsibility on their shoulders, their development will go faster, equity will be better promoted, and they will have more efficiency in the use of their resources."

Consistent with these beliefs, JAIN also fostered the participation of voluntary organizations in Uttar Pradesh's development programs. Nongovernmental organizations, he believed, often had a better understanding of the rural world than bureaucracies did, precisely because NGOs usually worked at the grass-roots level. Through his work in the cooperative union and the IDS, he was familiar with NGOs and their potential. Thus, in Uttar Pradesh he fostered the incorporation of NGOs directly into the state's development program, where their expertise was called upon to help formulate employment plans, verify the qualifications of *antyodaya* families, install thousands of tube wells, and promote adult education.

By organizing a Janata Party Rural Development Committee, JAIN helped spread "*antyodaya* development" to other states with Janata governments. In consequence, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachel Pradesh, Orissa, and Assam all adopted the Rajasthan-Uttar Pradesh program. Subsequently, the Government of India itself adopted the *antyodaya* approach in its Integrated Rural Development Program.

The Janata Party lost its national mandate in December 1979, after which JAIN relinquished his seat on Uttar Pradesh's planning commission and his chairmanship of the handicrafts board. Nonetheless, he remained intimately involved in India's development and has been called upon repeatedly to advise various state planning commissions. For example, in Karnataka he chaired the Expert Group tasked to prepare a fifteen-year Perspective Plan. He has also advised commissions and agencies as diverse as the National Planning Commission, Reserve Bank of India, and national ministries of commerce and finance.

JAIN has also plunged into a spate of research and writing, exploring in depth the variables of India's poverty vis-à-vis its development policies. He pursued these activities in 1984 on a year's sabbatical as visiting fellow at Harvard and Boston Universities.

Among the most influential of JAIN's efforts is an in-depth analysis of India's Community Development Program during its first thirty years. The study was a collective one, undertaken under the auspices of the Institute of Social Studies Trust headed by his wife. JAIN directed the investigation and, with B. V. Krishnamurthy and P. M. Tripathi as coauthors, drafted the final report. It was published in 1985 as *Grass without Roots: Rural Development under Government Auspices*. Based on studies of over a thousand families in several states, the research grimly concludes that "India is not making a significant dent on either poverty or inequality." This is because "the people themselves have no place in rural development, every available inch is occupied by the bureaucracy." The result, as the authors document in case after case, is that resources allocated for the relief of poverty almost never reach the truly poor; they continue to be siphoned off by bureaucrats and the rural "haves."

JAIN and his coauthors further concluded that this failure has been so comprehensive that it would be better to halt the government's poverty-alleviation programs altogether than to continue on the current path. They wrote that if power "cannot be transferred to the people at the village, block, and district level and the administrative organization cannot be subordinated to them at the appropriate level, then it is better to wind up the present field organization altogether and withdraw the subsidies, the concessional interest rates, and the centrally invented programmes for poverty alleviation. A vote for the retention of the present bureaucratic delivery system . . . is a vote not only for the perpetuation of precious resource waste but of poverty itself."

Their radical proposition aroused cries of negativism from critics, but JAIN insists that abandoning a policy that does not work is a constructive act. He contends, however, that there is a viable alternative to the present course. It is based on the cumulative experience of private community development workers, including those of the Indian Cooperative Union, and consists of: (1) democratic decentralization in which elected village, block, and district councils, as opposed to central bodies, actively direct the technical and administrative tasks involved in local development projects of all kinds, e.g., agriculture, health, animal husbandry, and fishing; (2) planning, funding, and implementation of development schemes in which microplans of villages, blocks, and districts are assimilated into the national plan and honored, and in which the whole village—rather than sectors within it—is developed



simultaneously; (3) ongoing audits of program successes and failures by respected leaders outside government; and (4) an ongoing commitment to feed and uplift the neediest families.

Aside from his passion for democratic decentralization, JAIN has also been speaking out on other issues. For example, he has attacked vociferously the Government of India's decision to favor the industrial sector of India's textile industry at the expense of the handloom sector. He points out that the government's decision to promote capital-intensive textile mills is causing a painful displacement of handloom weavers, without either absorbing them or creating a significant number of new jobs for others. With technological advances, textile milling is becoming less labor-intensive at a time when the number of people in desperate need of employment is on the rise. By favoring productivity and profits, he says, the state has once again shown that it has wrong priorities.

But JAIN is not a "knee-jerk" foe of modern technology. He believes that there are certain kinds of traditional employment in India that should be replaced by mechanization—and as soon as possible. This includes the "unclean" chores of animal slaughtering, leather tanning, and refuse handling that have condemned millions of Indians to live as "untouchable" outcasts. "The way to abolish untouchability," he says, mirroring an enduring concern of his mentor Mahatma Gandhi, "is not merely a constitution saying that untouchability is abolished, but abolishing it in the professions where it has evolved. Here, I am advocating the highest amount of technology."

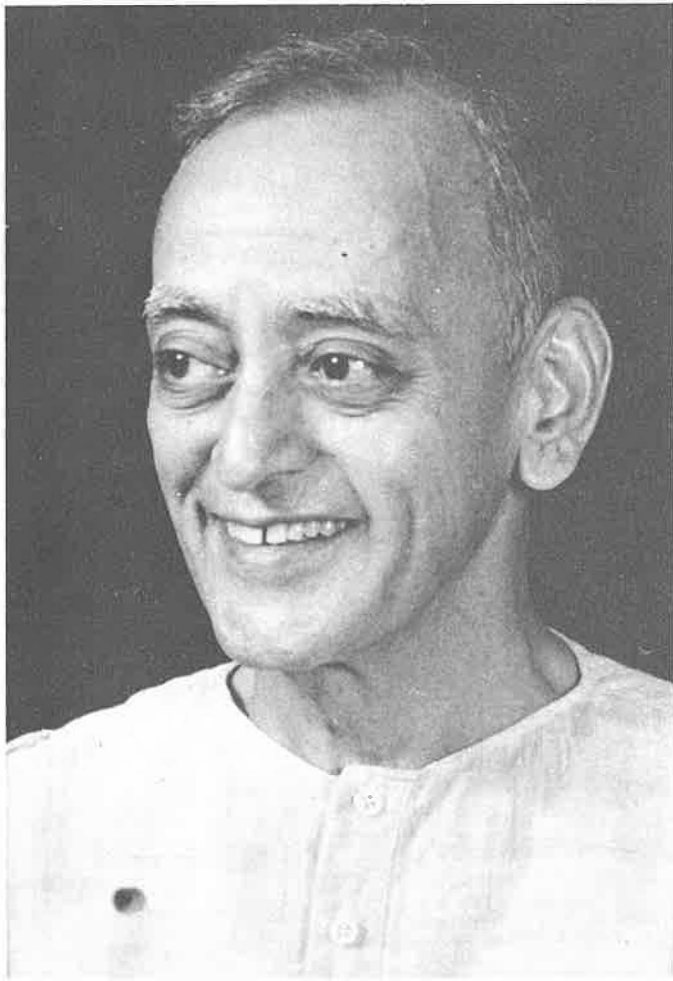
Surveying the Indian social and economic landscape in 1988, JAIN saw a bleak picture, especially from the vantage point of Mahatma Gandhi's dreams. The gap between India's "haves" and "have nots" was wider than ever. Poor families enjoyed an even tinier share of the country's income and resources than in the early decades of development. The percentage of people living in poverty was huge—nearly half the population—and the character of India's economic development programs was not only keeping the poor in poverty but also rendering them increasingly marginal within the country's national economy and its structure of government. Moreover, widespread and systematic environmental degradation, exacerbated by state-driven development, was adding yet another grave dimension to the lives of the poor by "recklessly destroying even such means of subsistence as nature had long provided them." Illiteracy was evidently permanent: more than 45 million school-age children were not acquiring so much as an elementary school education. All of this, JAIN concludes, "is the ultimate negation of Gandhi and all that he symbolizes."

JAIN carries on hopefully nevertheless: "We owe it to ourselves and to the freedom struggle . . . to make good our opportunities." His own experience has taught him that Mahatma Gandhi's uncompromising insistence on local self-government, local self-sufficiency, and priority to the poorest is not only morally right but practically sound—indeed, the only truly sound course for India.

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Manila

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*Сергей*