



Double celebration

March 23, 2007. This was a date highlighted in many a CEO's calendar. The place to be that Friday evening was Mumbai's Turf Club, venue of *Business India's* annual Businessman of the Year Award ceremony and lecture. As celebrations go, this one had a double attraction. In the first instance, Baba Kalyani, chairman and managing director, Bharat Forge, was to be felicitated as *Business India's* Businessman of the Year 2006. The year also marked the silver jubilee of this prestigious award itself – it was instituted in 1982 when Ajit Haksar, erstwhile chairman emeritus of ITC, was anointed the first ever Businessman of the Year. That was another milestone worth celebrating.

Guests arriving at the venue immediately got a sense that the evening ahead would be a special one. Walking on the red carpeted path that lead to the main seating area, they first encountered an exhibit that took them down memory lane. Comprising individual black and white portraits on canvas of all past winners, these were especially commissioned by *Business India*; this was a fitting tribute to each of the business icons in the magazine's hall of fame. There are 26 of them not 25, because in 1997, brothers Mukesh and Anil Ambani were declared joint winners of the award.

The colours of the evening – black, silver and blue with a dash of red from *Business India's* logo, created a dramatic, glittering ambience. The weather played true friend. A cool breeze blew in from the Arabian Sea, providing a welcome respite from the usual March heat. Into that perfect setting walked in Baba Kalyani, accompanied by wife Sunita, parents Neelkanth and Sulochana Kalyani, son Amit and daughter-in-law Deeksha, and brother Gaurishanker. Apart from the immediate family, there was Kalyani's extended clan – friends, colleagues, and associates, most of them

from Pune, his hometown.

They included close pal Rahul Bajaj, who came with son Sanjiv and cousin Niraj; Rahul Bajaj was present in a dual capacity – he had been nominated Businessman of the Year 1985. Sanjiv too had another compelling reason to be present; he had been part of the eminent jury that had selected Kalyani for the award last November. Other members of the jury who showed up included Arun Maira, chairman, BCG India, and Marico's Harsh Mariwala.

The previous year's winner, K.V. Kamath, and his wife Rajalakshmi were among the early arrivals. As is the tradition at *Business India*, Kamath had chaired the jury and now was to formally hand over the baton to Kalyani. Taking this duty seriously, Kamath in fact, had rescheduled his overseas trip to make it on time and so was fresh off the plane from Dubai. Apart from Bajaj, other earlier recipients of the award too made it a point to be present: ICICI's N. Vaghul, Ashok Ganguly, formerly of Unilever; Kumar Mangalam Birla, and HDFC's Deepak Parekh.

Six of our former winners are no more with us, having passed away. Some of them were represented by their family members. The eternally graceful Rajashree Birla was there on behalf of her late husband, Aditya Birla (Businessman of the Year 1990); sisters Nini Nanda and Veena Sakhuja came to collect the honours for their late father H.P. Nanda who was anointed Businessman of the Year in 1984, chiefly for warding off corporate raider Swraj Paul. The late Parvinder Singh, who was ailing when he was selected in 1998 and passed away shortly after receiving the award, was represented by son Malvinder Singh, CEO, Ranbaxy Laboratories. Doing the honours for the late Dhirubhai Ambani were nephews Nikhil and Hital Meswani.

Chief guest Kamal Nath, Union minister for commerce and industry, who had flown in from Delhi exclusively for

the occasion, demonstrated a businesslike punctuality. Nath formally inaugurated the exhibition before proceeding to the front row, escorted by Business India chairman and Editor-in-chief Ashok Advani and managing director Pheroza Billimoria. A notable absentee was guest of honour Lakshmi Mittal, CEO, Arcelor-Mittal who was held back at the nth moment by a business commitment in London.

Flagging off the formal ceremonies was host and comper for the evening, Brian Tellis of Fountainhead Events. Tellis welcomed the august gathering to the silver jubilee celebration of the country's single most coveted recognition for the business community. A short film showcasing 25 years of the award, produced by Pesho Wadia, introduced a nostalgic note that was to pervade the rest of the proceedings. It included testimonials from past winners like Russi Mody, erstwhile boss of Tata Steel, V. Krishnamurthy who had won the award when he was heading SAIL, Deepak Parekh and Sundram Fasteners' Suresh Krishna. All of them concurred that the award, being the first of its kind, was of special significance to them. Even to this day when awards are now aplenty, *Business India's* singular honour to one individual stands out.

In his welcome speech, Advani highlighted the pioneering spirit of the award. He recalled that back in 1982 while there were awards for sportspeople and film personalities, none existed for entrepreneurs or businessmen whose contributions to the national good remained unsung. The Businessman of the Year Award was mooted to celebrate the spirit of entrepreneurship, to identify role models in the business community whom the young could be inspired by.

After a short introduction by managing director Pheroza Billimoria, Kamath spoke about the selection process, elaborating on the compelling reason that had dictated the jury's choice. In an age when Indian business was looking outward and businessmen were extending their empires overseas, Kalyani, having been an early mover, was clearly leader of the global game. That was a testimony, added Kamath, to Kalyani's profound vision that Indians could take on the world.

Mittal, though absent in person, made it a point to be present in spirit, sending a recorded version of his address. Despite his stellar achievements, Mittal has not been selected so far for the award as past juries had taken the view that the award was meant for those businessmen who ran their primary businesses out of India. Wryly noting his exclusion, Mittal congratulated *Business India* on 25 years of the award.

"The high profile recipients of this award", he said "have all been flagbearers and role models. They have stood the test of time and become icons of industry." Mittal then went on to provide pointers about the how-to of a globalization gameplan. Given the richness of his experience, the tips had the full attention of the spellbound audience.

Chief guest Kamal Nath, after being introduced by Advani, shared a slice of his personal history. Before embracing politics, the minister had been an entrepreneur

himself and used to own, coincidentally, a forgings business. "Therefore, for me it is indeed a privilege, delight and a little nostalgic also, that today's award goes to Baba Kalyani," said the minister, adding that Kalyani's selection symbolized India's new entrepreneurial spirit which has been unshackled from government controls. "India is not only producing knowledge and IT; India today, is the largest producer of entrepreneurs. That is the story of India," said Nath in conclusion.

That upbeat observation was the perfect backdrop for the big moment. Another short film tracing Kalyani's business career and successes was shown before he was formally crowned by the minister and Kamath. A touching part of the film, as shot by photo editor Palashranjan Bhaumick, featured the senior Kalyanis talking about their son's childhood passion for all things mechanical. In his acceptance speech, Kalyani noted that being selected as *Business India's* Businessman of the Year was very special because "among the doyens of Indian industry who have been past recipients of this Award are some of my role models".

The theme of his speech, 'The Power of Dreams' reflected his ambition to dream big which had enabled him to reach, as he said "for the sky". His Bharat Forge, once a Rs5-crore company, is aiming to be the world's largest forging company by next year, an eminently achievable goal given its current standing as the world number two. "I am convinced that the opportunity in India today for young entrepreneurs to explore, innovate and unleash their talent and creativity is the most exciting in the world," concluded Kalyani to thunderous applause.

That brought the evening to its grand finale. A calling out of the roll of honour wherein each of the past winners or their representatives were invited on stage. A framed replica of their portraits was presented as a memento in a gesture of remembrance to everyone of the past winners of the Businessman of the Year award. As the icons lined up on stage, the photographers rushed to frame that image for posterity.

Managing director Bilimoria ended the formal part of the celebration with a heartfelt vote of thanks. Heading the list of benefactors was chief sponsor HDIL whose managing director Sunil Wadhawan was present. Other sponsors included regulars like Videocon represented in person by Venugopal Dhoot and Yes Bank, whose Rana Kapoor remains a long-time well-wisher. The evening's proceedings were recorded by CNBC-TV18 for a special half hour show to be aired subsequently.

As Tellis directed the guests to the well-stocked bars and well-laden tables catered to by Foodlink, Kalyani found himself mobbed. Amongst those waiting to greet him were Sharjah's Sheikh Tariq, Essar's Ravi Ruia and Anshuman Ruia, Tata Sons' Ishaat Hussain, IT doyen F.C. Kohli, S. Kumar's Vikas Kasliwal, and Aegon's Vimal Bhandari. The normally reserved Kalyani was in his element and a picture of joy. As the silver celebration proved, this was no ordinary award. The felicitation may pertain to a particular year, but the honour remains for a lifetime. ♦

Business India
THE MAGAZINE OF THE CORPORATE WORLD
**BUSINESSMAN
OF THE YEAR**

The power of dreams



I am honoured to have been selected *Business India's* Businessman of the Year 2006. I would like to thank *Business India* for this great honour. On behalf of my colleagues at Bharat Forge and in the Kalyani Group, I receive this award with utmost humility.

As you would all agree, it needs loyal, committed and talented individuals to build a great company. I am fortunate to have an abundance of such outstanding people working with us and it is a privilege for me to lead a truly accomplished team, many of whom are here today. Year after year, our people have produced exceptional results. They are our true champions and it is only befitting that I should receive this award on behalf of the 10,000 people who have contributed in making our organisation what it is today. I am confident that this recognition will greatly motivate and encourage them to pursue our vision with stronger passion, purpose and determination.

It is also a matter of great pride to receive this award at the hands of a person as distinguished as Mr Kamal Nath,

Honourable Minister for Commerce & Industry in the Government of India. In every sense, he is industry's friend, philosopher and guide. His understanding of issues and concerns of industry are outstanding and he is able to present them strongly within the government and at various domestic and international platforms.

Mr Ashok Advani and your team at *Business India* – I compliment you for your vision. When you instituted this Award 25 years ago, you broke new ground. In those days, celebrating corporate success was neither fashionable nor done. Thanks to your perseverance and untiring efforts, achievements of business leaders and companies have gradually gained the respect and recognition that they have always deserved. To be selected as *Business India's* Businessman of the Year is very special to me because among the doyens of Indian industry who have been past recipients of this award, are some of my role models – persons whose conduct and achievements have left an indelible mark and have influenced the shaping of my outlook and character. Mr Vaman Kamath is one such individual and the fact that he chaired the jury that thought me worthy of this recognition is very satisfying and fulfilling.

On this occasion I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of a very special individual, who in many ways was my mentor in my formative years. I am referring to the late Mr S.L. Kirloskar. Mr Kirloskar influenced my choice of profession, the educational institutions that I attended and my approach towards life and business. The 18 years that he was chairman at Bharat Forge was a period of intense learning for me under a truly remarkable business leader who was also one of the great doyens of Indian industry.

Mr Kirloskar had several exceptional qualities but perhaps the one that has left the greatest impact on me, is his resilience of character and adherence to values which he demonstrated on the several occasions when he was challenged by adversity. He was a fine human being and will always remain a source of the highest inspiration for me.

My parents, my wife Sunita, my son Amit, daughter-in-law Deeksha, my two lovely grand children Adit and

I was born into a Maharashtrian family of agriculturists at Karad in western Maharashtra and went to a military school at Belgaum in Karnataka. Thanks to my parents, I had a disciplined upbringing

Shriya have been my pillars of strength in this exhilarating journey. They are my support system and I greatly value their love, care and understanding without which I would not have achieved even a measure of the success that has come my way.

My friends, many of whom are here today – I thank you specially for making my journey of last 37 years so enjoyable. I specifically would like to thank Rahul.

I have always believed that what we learn early in life has a tremendous bearing in shaping character and in

instilling critical values. These then become assets for a lifetime. Many of you perhaps may not know that my moorings are in rural India. I was born into a Maharashtrian family of agriculturists at Karad in western Maharashtra and went to a military school at Belgaum in Karnataka. Thanks to my parents, I had a disciplined upbringing, imbibed strong values and benefited from a good education in some of the finest institutions. My small town upbringing, however, instilled in me the ability to dream big – to reach for the sky – to aspire beyond imagination. Our Honourable President, Dr Abdul Kalam has perhaps put the power of dreams in right perspective when he said:

**“Dream is not what you see in sleep...
Dream is the thing which does not let you sleep.”**

When I joined Bharat Forge in 1971 it was straight out of engineering college. We were a Rs5-crore company then and struggling to survive. Pitted against us were several established organisations including the then largest forging company in the world that had set up a large manufacturing facility almost in our backyard. For me those were days of reckoning. To succeed was an imperative because failure could have meant an uncertain future, something that was not acceptable to me.

I am a die-hard optimist and therefore even in those excruciatingly difficult times I was convinced that we could turn the corner and there would be better days ahead. We worked hard and shoulder-to-shoulder with our people and together we gradually built our business and company. We were driven by a constant “fire in the belly” and aspired to scale new heights.

In the 1970's, we were driven by the goal to be the largest forging company in India. In the 1980's we worked to become the largest in Asia. In the past 10 years we developed a global vision and have gradually grown our business to a level where we are now at the threshold of global leadership.

Bharat Forge is a relatively young company. We have been in business for 40 years. A distinctive feature of our evolution is that since the early days we have learnt from adversities and challenges which have brought out the best in us. Till 1997 we were primarily focused on the domestic market. At that time the domestic economy was passing through a subdued phase. However, winds of globalisation had perceptibly begun to blow in India's direction. We believed that if we could gain an ‘early bird’ advantage, globalisation could provide us an opportunity to enlarge our markets and expand our business.

We also understood that this phase of globalisation was different because it appeared to be driven by technology and was supported by the remarkable speed with which countries were removing roadblocks in the movement of goods, services, capital and ideas. If we were to give an outward orientation to our business, it was imperative to scale up technology levels within the company and create an organisational culture that would breed excellence. We placed great emphasis on introducing effective management systems and used them as tools to implement best

practices across the company. The challenge was virtually that of creating a new organisation that could compete in global markets against the best in the world. The task was daunting but I am proud that as an organisation we rose to the occasion and put in place the building blocks on which we have succeeded in creating a global business.

In the past 10 years, we have gained in confidence and have developed a strong self-belief that we can compete successfully against global leaders and emerge winners. Across the value chain, we are benchmarked against best industry standards. A strong customer focus that we have infused into the organisation has meant that we can now provide high levels of service to both our domestic and international customers. We have forged long-term relationships with many of our customers, which have given us the opportunity to partner them in their future development programmes. Today Bharat Forge has 38 global OEM's and Tier 1 suppliers as customers.

We supply critical components to customers in every geographical region in the world through our manufacturing facilities in India and our subsidiaries in the US, Germany, Sweden and Scotland and our joint venture with the FAW Group in China. Every second truck produced in North America and Europe has a front axle made by Bharat Forge. Our vision now is to further consolidate our position and make Bharat Forge a leading brand in the global automotive industry. We still have a long way to go but we are confident that the path we have taken will take us to our goal.



What have the developments of the past 10 years meant for Bharat Forge? For one, we are now a global company that is focused on achieving global leadership. More significant for me, however, is the visible change in the DNA of our organisation. Embedded attitudes and mindsets have given way to a “leap of faith”. There is a new energy that now pervades the organisation coupled with a strong underlying belief that we can take on the world and nothing can stop us!

That is the exuberance that we are seeing in our people. I have also observed a strong undercurrent of patriotism in our employees, which stems from a dream to see India as a dominant economy on the global stage. Clearly there is immense pride in people as they see themselves contributing to establish “Brand India” as a symbol of quality,



reliability and technological competence in the global market.

Sixteen years after India embarked on the path of globalisation, it is clear that our time has come and the country is moving decisively to become a major economic power of the 21st century. A notable feature of this new direction is that it is being driven by visionary entrepreneurs, many of whom are here this evening. The Mittal, Tata Steel and Hindalco takeovers of Arcelor, Corus and Novelis are a few recent examples that exemplify Indian industry's rapid emergence on the global stage.

Clearly the present generation of Indian entrepreneurs has demonstrated that they can manage adversity, leapfrog traditional cultures and mindsets and adapt new technologies. There are several among you who are already global business leaders, whose achievements and vision are a source of great pride for the country and who will motivate many more entrepreneurs to traverse your path.

I believe that the next wave of globalisation will be characterised by the growing economic weight of developing countries, a greater emphasis on achieving higher levels of productivity and a more accelerated diffusion of technologies. India has unique strengths, which it can leverage to capture emerging opportunities. Most important among these is our young population, which we have an opportunity to nurture with good quality education so that they are trained to work with and absorb new technologies. Our pool of trained professionals is already among the largest and most accomplished in the world. Over 10 million young people will join the workforce every year in the next 20 years. This is a tremendous advantage that is unique to India. Combine this with our entrepreneurial skills and we have what it takes to be a critical player in the global economy.

We are in the defining 60th year of our country's independence. I am convinced that the opportunity in India today for young entrepreneurs to explore, innovate and unleash their talent and creativity is the most exciting in the world. I am also sure that this situation will continue for some time. From my own experience it is clear that young empowered Indians from across the country and even from humble backgrounds have the opportunity to seize the moment, pursue their dreams and realise their

aspirations. It is for us to provide them an environment in which they can do this.

The first thing that our country needs is faster economic growth that can transform us into a fully developed country in the next 20 years. If our economy grows at 9-10 per cent on a sustained basis for the next seven years, we would be able to overcome unemployment and create immense prosperity for future generations. We therefore need to create wealth and then ensure that the fruits of growth and development are dispersed and shared by all.

Our challenge is to bridge the gap between the haves and have-nots and lift a large number of people into the global middle class. It is this group of people who will in future, participate actively in the global marketplace, demand world-class products and aspire for international standards of higher education. Most of those who enter the middle class would be those who are able to make a smooth transition from agriculture to manufacturing and services and can acquire valuable skills to succeed. Rural and agricultural India must be brought into the mainstream and made an inextricable part of development. For this to happen all sections of the young population must have access to education and to opportunities not only for jobs and self-employment but also for professional and intellectual development.

At the stage of development at which India is now poised, a critical factor that will determine our long-term success would be our ability to create large capacities for higher education in the country. We need many new temples of learning to which our young population should have unfettered access. We need to arm our young people with skills that are relevant in the 21st century global economy. Our challenge therefore is not only to create such institutions but also ensure a multi-fold access for our people to these academic centres of excellence so that they become well equipped to meaningfully participate in the tremendous opportunities that are unfolding in our country and in the world.

I am sure that our dream of a strong and prosperous India will be realised during our generation. I am also confident that business leaders in the corporate sector will contribute their mite and partner the government and other stakeholders in building a new and vibrant 21st century India, which clearly is destined to be a dominant force in the future global economy.

I would like to conclude on a personal note with a Chinese proverb that to a great extent reflects where I believe I am today.

"Happiness is someone to love, something to do and something to hope for."

I have been blessed with a life and career that brings all three of these vital elements together. I love my work because it gives me something to do that has worth and meaning, and I know that as long as I bring my best to it, my future will be filled with hope.

Thank you all for this Award and for this memorable evening.