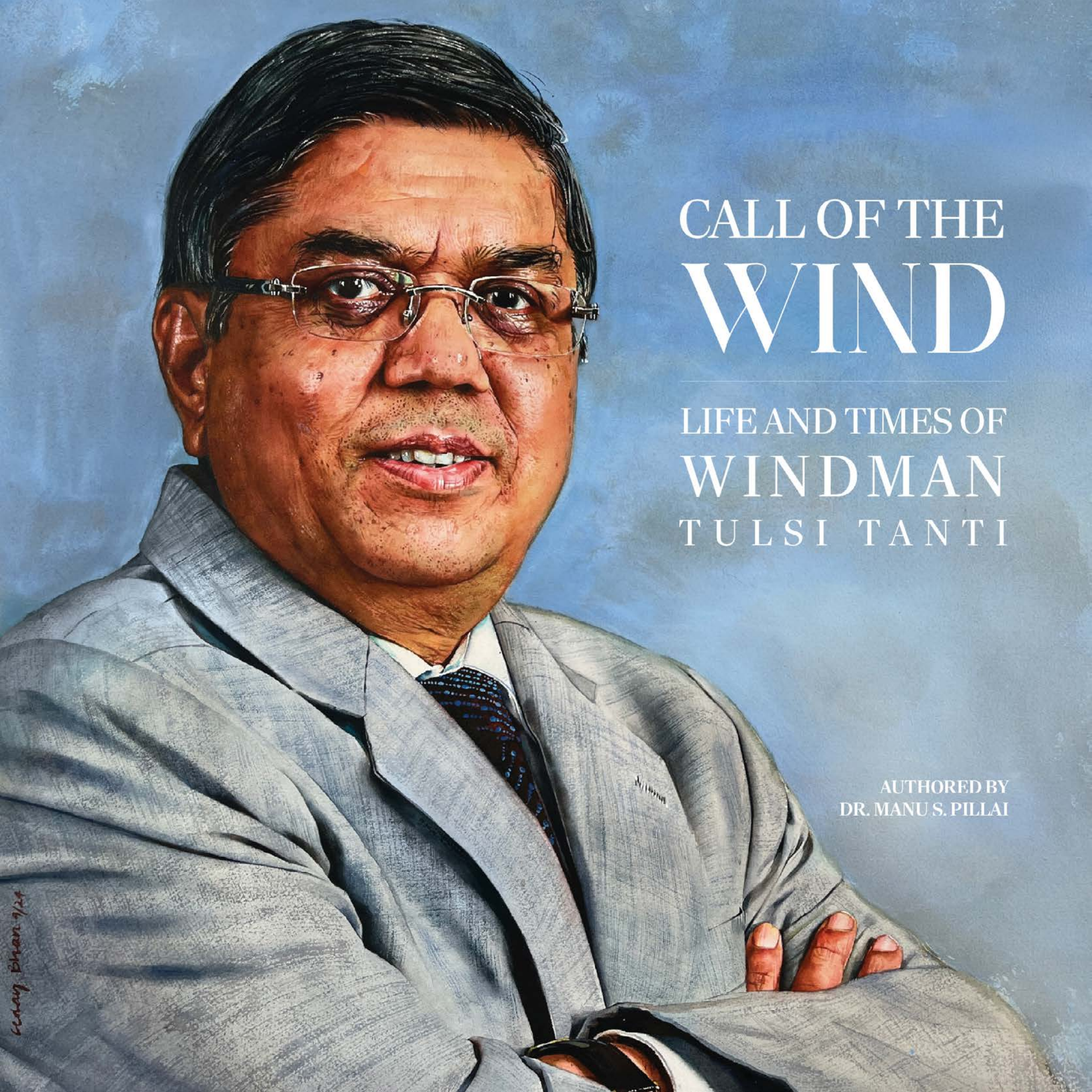




CALL OF THE WIND

LIFE AND TIMES OF
WINDMAN
TULSI TANTI

AUTHORED BY
DR. MANU S. PILLAI

Manu Pillai 9/24

CALL OF THE WIND

LIFE AND TIMES OF
W I N D M A N
T U L S I T A N T I

AUTHORED BY DR. MANU S. PILLAI





THE MAN

The values that inspired him to dream beyond the ordinary.

THE IMPACT

The visionary who turned wind into a force that powered nations.

THE LEGACY

The enduring light of a life lived in service of tomorrow.





Foreword

Tulsi Tanti was a man ahead of his times. He foresaw the potential of renewable energy well before it became a buzzword, either in India or the rest of the world. He was a true entrepreneur who saw opportunity and took risk before the bandwagon came along. In many ways, he is the father of the renewables industry in India. In his path, India is now a world leader in renewable energy generation.

In our respective journeys, we often encounter moments when the odds seem insurmountable, when industries must be built before businesses can succeed. It is in such moments that leaders like Tulsi Tanti stand apart, not just for what they achieved, but for the courage with which they pursued a challenge.

It is rare for a business leader to be remembered with warmth and affection even by commercial rivals. This respect stemmed simply from Tulsi Tanti's insight that true success and change lay in the health and progress of the whole ecosystem rather than in just some of its constituent parts. His ability to invariably focus on the big picture made even competitors see in 'Tulsibhai' a guide.

The book you hold is a tribute to this remarkable man. He left too soon, and his loss is still felt by his family, friends, colleagues, and industry. But his legacy endures and gains a spotlight as the world battles the challenge of climate change. Tulsi Tanti was one of the first true climate warrior entrepreneurs recognised even by the United Nations. When future histories of our times are written, his will be a name that merits a sincere reference. His work is a powerful reminder that industry, when driven by purpose, can be the most powerful force for national and global good.

Call of the Wind captures only a fraction of a life so richly lived. Yet, it is my hope that this book will inspire its readers to, like Tulsi Tanti, think bold, stay undefeated, and, most importantly, fight not just for themselves but for a greater good. It is this that made his life rich and fulfilling; and it is this that enshrines the 'Wind Man of India'; as an enduring icon for posterity. It is an honour to lend my voice to this work, and I hope that the story of Tulsi Tanti will inspire many more to dream ambitiously, build responsibly, and contribute meaningfully to India's future.

As for me, I will always miss Tulsi who was not just a fellow entrepreneur, but a friend with whom I shared many core values and a co-visionary, someone with whom I could share a larger dream for the world we wanted to help build.

Anil Agarwal
Founder & Chairman of Vedanta Resources Ltd.



जिसका नाम हवाओं पर लिखा है

आओ उसकी बात करें, जिसका नाम हवाओं पर लिखा है।
नामुमकिन को मुमकिन करना, मुश्किल को आसान,
सारे जीवन काम यही कर गया है एक इंसान।
सोचो तो इस दुनिया में हैं जाने कितने लोग,
उसके सहारे पूरे हुए जिनके कितने अरमान।
फिर भी शालीनता और नम्रता उसकी थी पहचान।
कैसे कहें और कैसे बताएँ कितना था वह महान,
कोई उसका किन शब्दों में कर सकता है बखान।

पहले तो परिवार के कारोबार में पाई सफलता,
लेकिन उसका मन आकाश को छूने को था मचलता।
एक नई कामयाबी की सूरत में देखी सूरत,
कठिनाई के पत्थर काट के बनाई जीत की मूरत।

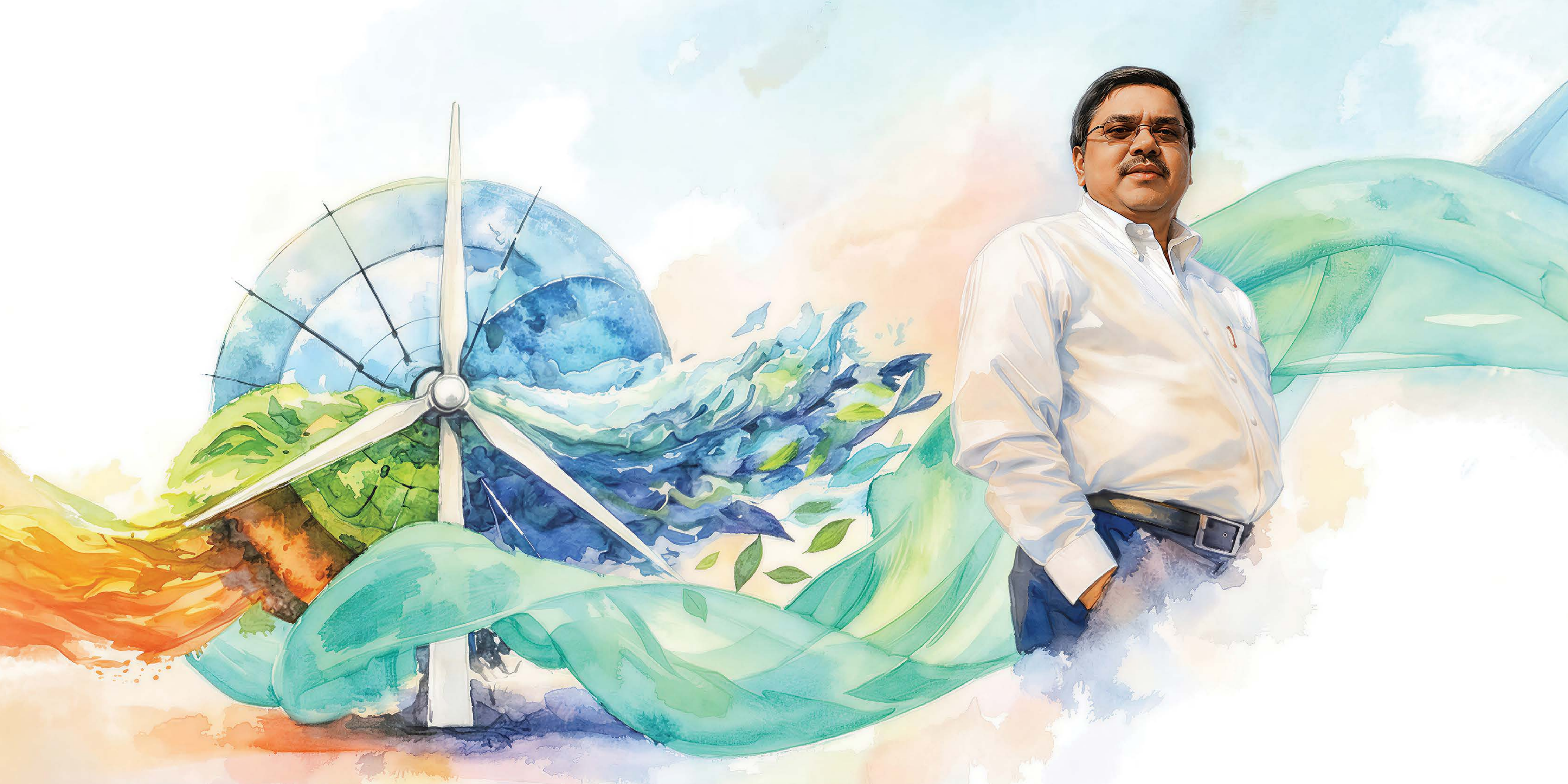
जाने उसकी और हवाओं की क्या हो गई बात,
फिर दोनों ने छोड़ा नहीं कभी एक-दूजे का हाथ।
ये दोस्ती बिजली बन के फैली नगर-नगर में,
कारखानों में, खेतों में, बाज़ारों में, घर-घर में।
पश्चिम देश जो पहले थे हमें सिखाते,
वही बाद में भारत के इस बेटे को अचरज से तकते,
ढाँतों तले हैरत से उँगली दबाते।

देश में और फिर देश के बाहर उसकी सफलता बिजली बनकर दौड़ी।
उसके कारनामों की सूची समय के संग-संग
होती गई कुछ और भी लंबी और भी चौड़ी।
वो ऐसा इंसान था जिसने धरती माँ के दुःख को जाना,
उद्योगों के कारण कैसे मौसम बदल रहे हैं, उसने ये पहचाना।
उसने चाहा प्रगति हो, प्रदूषण न होने पाए,
दोनों काम एक साथ हों, उसने ऐसा किया उपाय।

उसका ज्ञान और उसके जतन और उसकी कोशिश,
कितनी मिलों और मशीनों को हैं रखे ज़िंदा।
मुझे तो शक है, ऐसा इंसान होगा कभी आईदा।
कितने रास्तों, कितने घरों में उसके कारण है उजाला,
ऐसा इंसान अपनी शक्ति, अपने उजालों में है हमेशा जीने वाला।

आओ इस तस्वीर का अब हम दूसरा रूप भी देखें,
देखें सफलता के साए, अब प्यार की धूप भी देखें।
ये वो घनेरा पेड़ था, जितना ज़्यादा हुआ वो ऊँचा,
ठीक उतनी ही उसकी जड़ें धरती में उतरतीं गहरी।
अपने सब परिवार की चाहत, अपने संस्कारों का आदर,
अपनी परंपरा की इज़ाज़त दुनिया की सारी दौलत से,
दुनिया की सारी शोहरत से कहीं ज़्यादा ठहरी।
अपनों को अपना समझा, औरों को भी अपनाया।
आज न जाने कितने सिरों पर है उसका ही साया।
आओ उसकी यादों के साथों में बैठें,
उसके ऊँचे आदर्शों की पोथी खोलें,
और अगर बन पाए तो हम
थोड़े-बहुत ही उसके जैसे हो लें।


Javed Akhtar





CHAPTER 1

THE MAN

History carves out a special place for leaders whose contributions are of a more exalted order.

There is a type of leader who can enter a room and, without effort or announcement, lift it up with his gravitas and positivity. Tulsi Tanti fit perfectly in this rare category. Famously unassuming, he carried in him an almost gravitational optimism: about people, and for the future. Those who encountered him, even briefly, could at once sense what made him special: an immediate and unforced warmth, a sparkling curiosity, and a confidence that was titanic in scope while utterly devoid of arrogance. History, in fact, carves out a special place for leaders of this order. After all, TRT, as many affectionately referred to him, did not merely build a company. He reinvented whole

industries, altered countless lives, and recrafted the very definition of leadership. His legacy is so tremendous that it transcends mere balance sheets and market valuations. It is a story in which enterprise meets imagination, and success is measured in purpose, rather than in possessions. Indeed, to remember him only as a legendary businessman is to miss the point.

For he was an author of opportunity, the architect of a crucial sector, and an instrument of change who fought for something immensely profound: the future of our planet, and the prospects of humanity itself.



Supa Wind Park,
Wind turbine nacelle





Tanti brothers

TRT's origins lay in fairly traditional settings. Born in 1958 in Rajkot to Rambhaben and Ranchhodhbhai Tanti, few could have predicted the precise heights to which he would rise; from a small town to one day standing tall with world leaders and featuring on global magazine covers. The Tantis were a joint family with a series of modest concerns, ranging from farms, a cold storage business, a movie theatre, and so on. As one of the older children in the family, the assumption was that TRT would grow up to manage these. While he took a keen interest in the family businesses, bringing in systems and upgrading technology, there was a

pulsing restlessness in him—a sense that life *had* to stretch beyond the boundaries of his hometown and its ready comforts. When he was a young boy, as one story goes, he saw a car, a relatively rare possession in those days, for the first time. He didn't just admire it from afar. Running up close and tracing his fingers over the bonnet, he declared, 'One day I'll have a bigger one.' It wasn't a yearning for wealth, but a statement of resolve; an early voicing of his lifelong mantra that regardless of who you were, where you were born, and what path the world prescribed, great things were possible if you were determined enough.

The world celebrates TRT today as the Father of Renewable Energy in India, but to know the man behind the mission, we must go back to the beginning.





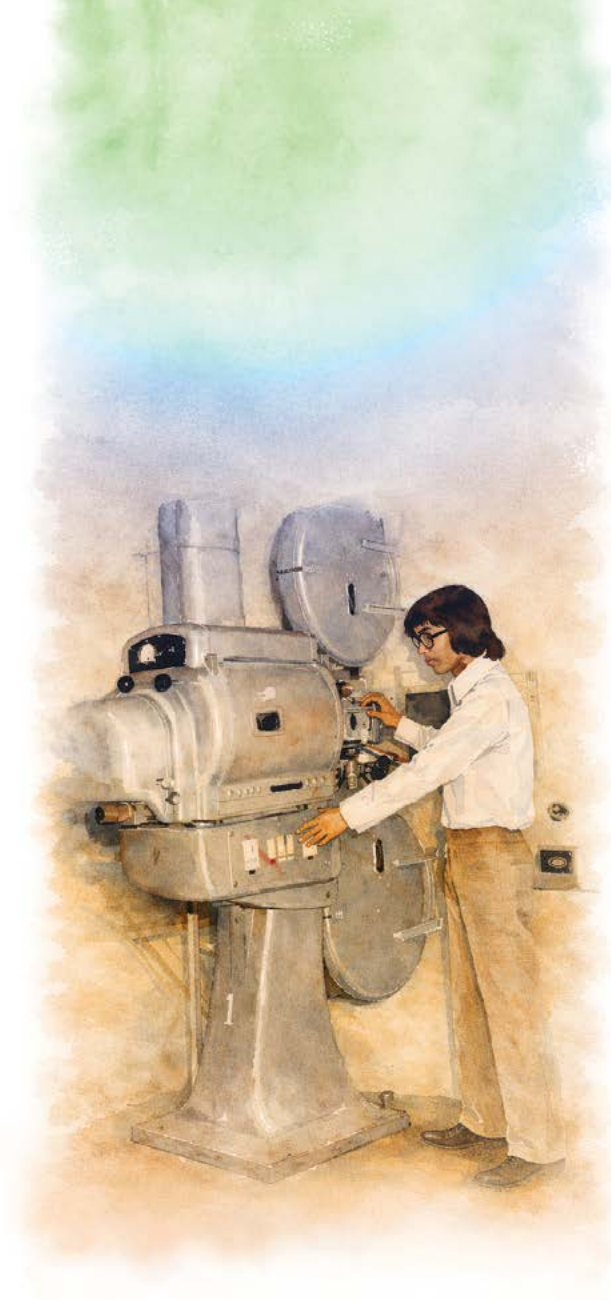
Suzlon Generator Manufacturing Unit,
Chakan

What made TRT's innate confidence distinct, however, was that he combined it with affability, a student-like curiosity, and a willingness to learn from every person he encountered—qualities he retained for the entirety of his life. He admired the sage wisdom of his grandfather, the business acumen of his paternal uncle, the dignified persona of his father, the resourcefulness of his mother, and the myriad qualities of his siblings and friends. Alongside, he developed an almost evangelical faith in the power of sharing. As he would observe years later, it was his grandfather who taught him early on that 'whatever you do in life, do it for something more than your own ends. Do it for others.' This was a mantra he implemented at every stage of his life, and one that naturally made him popular with people around him.

As contemporaries remember, everyone from teachers to his friends and even their parents saw in him a role model. At social events like weddings, festivals, family travels and functions, he was always at the forefront, planning, executing, supervising, ensuring the event was a success.

If ever there was a problem, all they had to do was call over 'Tulsi,' who always had a solution and a winning smile. In his small town, he was beginning to shine, and friends, family and associates became increasingly certain that he was made for bigger things in the world beyond.





At school, he had been a bright student, regularly acing his exams. In college, he would go on to become a state topper. TRT's relentless appetite for knowledge reached new heights in adulthood. By the late 1970s, he was simultaneously studying for a commerce degree and a diploma in engineering. His mornings were spent understanding ledgers, and his afternoons with engines and machines.

He even qualified as a radio mechanic and cinema technician, drawn as he was to all subjects that taught him how things functioned.



It was a window into that special combination he exemplified: that of a practical thinker and a visionary; a man of business and an engineer. A small example will suffice. He owned a much-coveted Suvega moped, which his two closest friends also craved to ride. He'd let them borrow it, until one day he spent hours installing a new seat he had personally designed. Henceforth three

people could ride it together. The budding engineer had found a solution that addressed the immediate problem while also reinforcing a cherished value: togetherness. In a sense, that Suvega captured what he always believed: that the truest measure of a solution was how many people it brought along and benefitted, beyond its cleverness alone.

Student of Life, Engineer at Heart!



By his early twenties, armed with this continual urge to stretch beyond his boundaries, coupled with magnetic positivity, TRT was in a position to pave a new path, leading to newer horizons. He could easily have lived a good life, running his family businesses, but in his mind, all this was only a launchpad, the starting point of his dreams, not their culmination. His parents had worked hard to lay down foundations, and he saw it as his duty to stretch his wings and soar. He was, in essence, a builder, one with goals almost audacious in their scope and design. All the same, he also knew he needed hands-on experience.

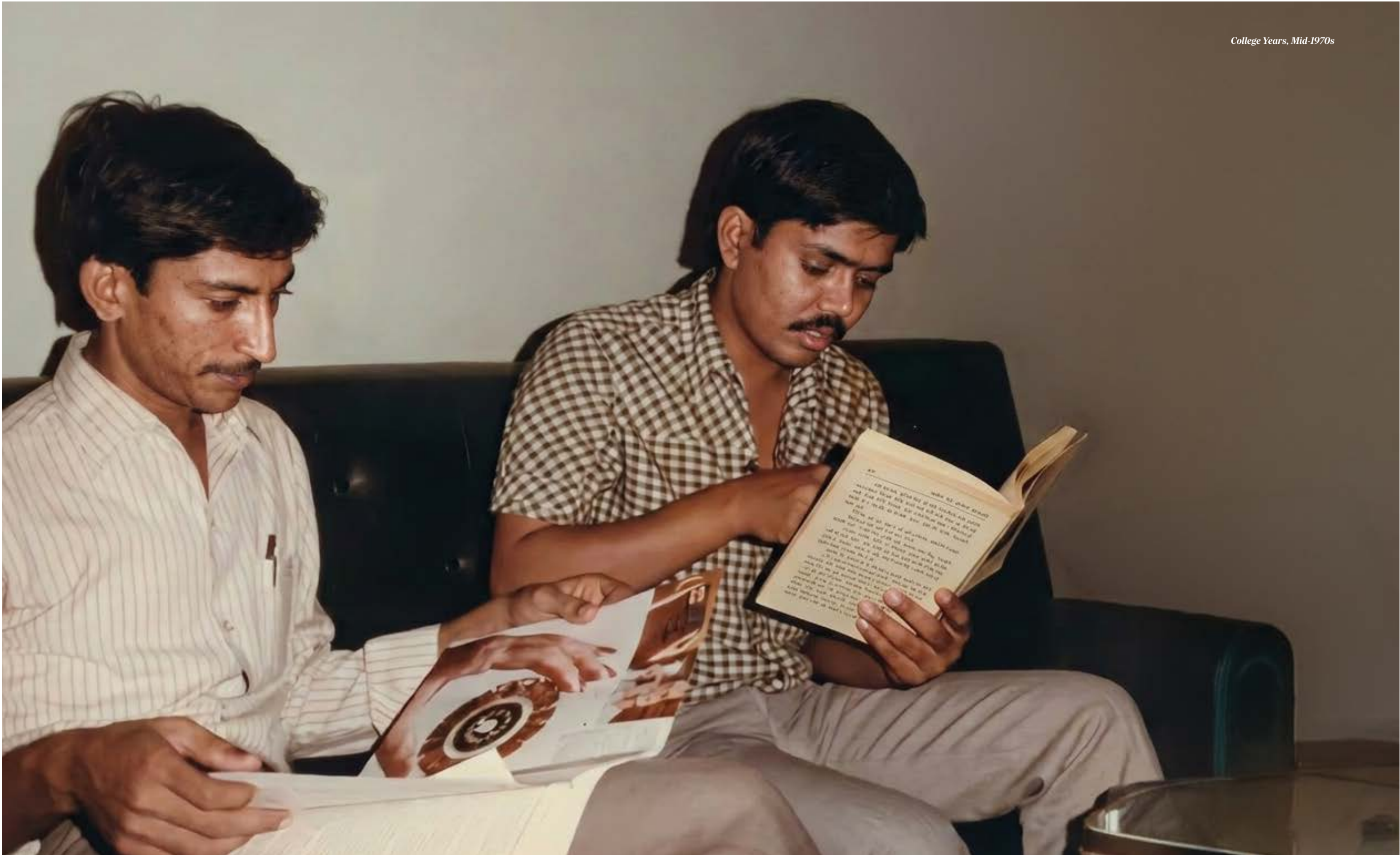
He, therefore, made a deliberate choice in setting up his early enterprises outside the family cocoon, as a test of his own abilities, competing with himself, rather than with others.

In 1981, he established an ice factory with a friend, drawing on his experience from the family's cold storage unit. He did not hesitate to experiment:

if an idea were proposed, he would study it, gauge whether it could work, and set about pulling it off.

He could smell opportunity from afar. He had his finger on the pulse of the market and knew what businesses would work in the present and in the near future, setting up several timely businesses, and running them successfully - from a sari-dyeing unit, paper manufacturing, polyurethane foam production, to high-density polyethylene bag making. In fact, in his twenties, he is said to have seriously studied some fifty business ideas, zeroed in on nearly two dozen, and succeeded in most that he took up.

These were serious ventures, not just flights of youthful fancy, or dilettante pursuits. There was a method and logic to every business he approached.



College Years, Mid-1970s

Since the late 1970s, he had been investing in India's stock market. He would scan the newspapers every day, marking out the prospectuses he wished to study. These companies lay in sectors as varied as chemicals, infrastructure, and manufacturing. He would then delegate one of his brothers to write a letter to the relevant enterprises requesting details, to study the businesses. This was the pre-digital era, and studying the material at length, he would finally take a call on whether to invest or not. Almost invariably he earned strong returns.

He studied companies within the broader context of their sectors, focusing on how industries functioned and evolved. He'd assemble data, subscribe to magazines, and keep himself abreast of the latest developments.

The result of this style of mastering a subject with all its nuances and technicalities, meant that when a fitting opportunity presented itself, TRT was primed to act.

To others it could look like a surprising turn. To him, with all his preparatory work, it was a calculated move; a seizing of opportunity at the perfect moment. All along his professional journey, the in-depth studies and eventual successes of his

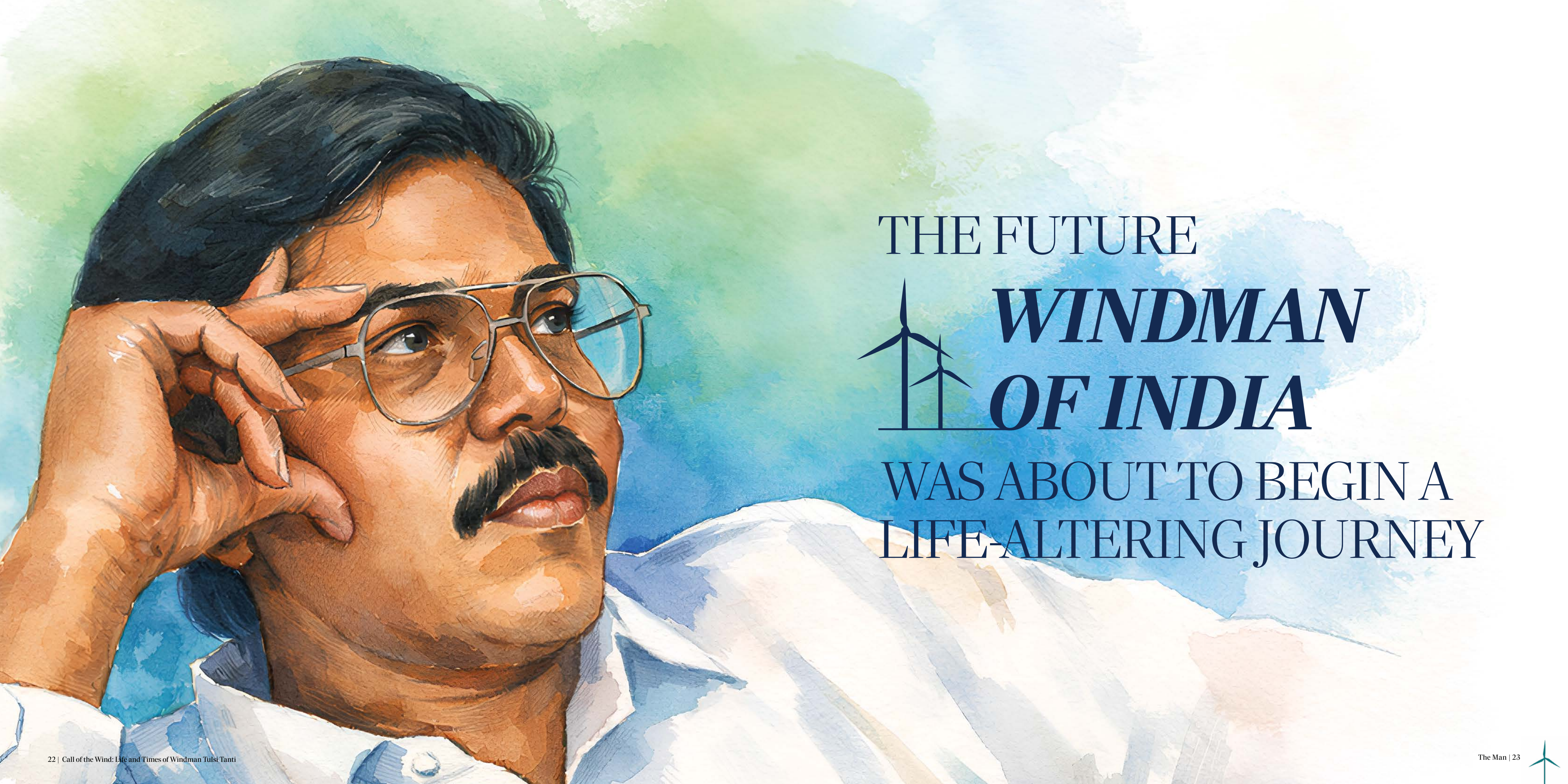
early concerns cemented TRT's confidence as an entrepreneur. They validated his belief that he could raise up a successful venture from scratch. Where others often theorised about cost, quality, risk, and reward in business school textbooks, he learnt them from direct, methodical self-study and experience.

But what stood out most was his forward-facing curiosity, one that could foresee a whole arc of possibilities, well before others. Being ahead of the curve set him apart, even among other skilled entrepreneurs of his time, and would one day enable him to make an impact of global proportions.

For instance, as far back as 1981, when in his early twenties, he visited the United States on a personal trip with his wife, he happened to visit a store selling home computers by Commodore Business Machines. Computers were in their early infancy at the time, unfamiliar even to American businesses. TRT recognised its wide-ranging potential, even as many others viewed it with suspicion. 'This,' he observed 'is the technology of the future. We must learn about it.' So, when he returned, he carried along a Commodore PET. It was a signature move: investing in the new and unknown not for novelty, but to be ready for what was coming.

That was Tulsi Tanti: a man who saw the future as a gift waiting to be claimed, instead of a threat to be managed. He was, in that sense, always an early adopter, unafraid of change. Indeed, by the mid-1980s, it became clear that he had it in him to take on ever more ambitious projects. And true to form, having proved himself in several business concerns, he now sought something greater, a venture that would catapult him into a different league altogether. The first step in this direction was departing Rajkot for fresh pastures.





THE FUTURE
 ***WINDMAN
OF INDIA***
WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN A
LIFE-ALTERING JOURNEY



Every great builder is at heart an engineer, someone who delights in solving problems and believes that all setups can be bettered if one studies them closely and thinks boldly enough.

Tulsi Tanti was the embodiment of this spirit. Technology of every kind fascinated him, and he was a great believer in its potential for positive disruption. Even in his growing years back home, he was drawn to the rhythm of machines and the logic that powered them. The hum of the projector in his family’s cinema drew him as much as the gears of a car or the buzz of the radio. In his twenties, he devoured issue after issue of *PC Magazine*.

But where others saw just objects, he delineated systems as elements to be understood, mastered, and ultimately also to be improved.

Engineering, for him, was far more than a profession; it was central to his being. It was his method of seeing the world: a disciplined curiosity about how things worked and how he could make them better.

TRT spent days understanding how a machine on a table could eat paper while transmitting its contents to a location across the world. Turned out that it was an

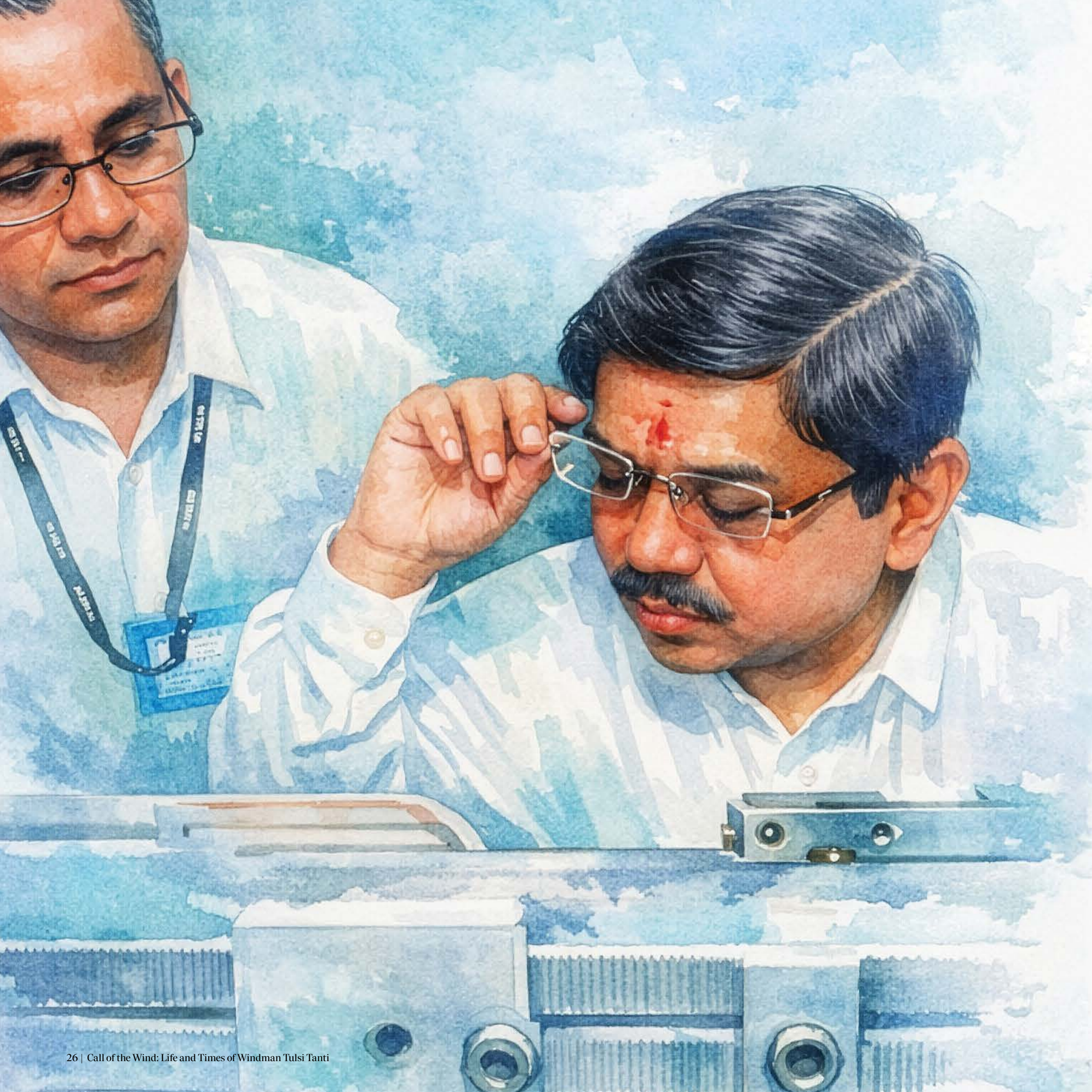


early age fax machine, which had caught his curiosity. He combined his insatiable thirst for learning with formidable business instincts and sharp financial fluency. In fact, it is legendary among most of his colleagues that armed with his small pocket calculator, he could work through the most complex problems to arrive at solutions in minutes, while the team poured over layered Excel sheets. For he always understood both the technical demands and the monetary arithmetic required to make a winning proposition. Now a married man with a son, and a daughter on the way, TRT went beyond the comforts and limitations of home and spotted an opportunity in Surat, one of Gujarat’s historic trading and textile hubs.

Most would have preferred the security of the status quo at a time like this, but not our serial entrepreneur, eternally on the lookout for new challenges.

His transition across early businesses and then into textiles was anything but impulsive. He had long been researching the sector, its dynamics, costs, and potential and had grown convinced that there was a solid window here where he could carve his own path despite the big established business houses in Surat.





A huge opportunity came along when TRT visited a family connection who had a unit that manufactured textile machines near Surat. He was put up for that night at the unit, which housed a demo yarn sizing machine – a totally unknown technology in India at the time. Being a family friend, this coveted technology was shown to TRT, who imprinted and absorbed every nut and bolt, following up with a second tour the next morning, even before the managers had logged in to work. He was now convinced that it was this advanced technology with which he would enter the textile industry. He declared to his family and his close friends, ‘This is the business we shall do!’ Having come with the plan to buy a ₹5-lac machine, he ended up placing an order for a ₹75-lac machine, which no one in the sector had used thus far.

When his brothers reminded him that they were stepping into unknown territory, pat came the reply, ‘We will learn and master this unknown!’ This, in fact, would become one of his most iconic traits – the conviction that nothing was impossible if there was real intent and limitless passion.

It was the kind of pluck and courage that both frustrated and amazed those around him. But for him, fear was never an option. If anything, the prospect only sharpened his resolve. He put up the first factory in Surat, and by 1990, he had not one, not two, but three thriving textile units, along with an office in Ahmedabad.

Master the unknown



Alongside the business, he was also building and democratising access to top-tier technology, something that was to become a lifelong mission. As his friends and family members recall, whenever he came across new technology, yet to debut commercially in the Indian market, he began working on creating ecosystems to produce technology of matching quality locally in India at a fraction of the cost.

This experiment was also propelled by a higher goal: the country's wider industrial landscape.

The textiles sector was being inhibited by monopolies and lethargic practices, hampering innovation and efficiency. The existing way of things also left technology and capacity concentrated in a few hands. His agenda was to change this for good.



But personal benefit alone held little appeal for TRT. As the old saying goes, a rising tide lifts all boats, and he was determined to serve as that tide. With this end in mind, he established Surat's first textile industrial estate, standardising building specifications and facilitating approvals, loans, and shared infrastructure for smaller players.

These were businesses that would never otherwise have had a shot at scaling up or expanding. But with his fierce energy, he enabled growth for all, an approach that delivered rich dividends. In fact, within a few years, he transformed Surat's textile landscape, making technology, high-quality raw material, and much else available to a far wider segment than before. This also explains how, during the same period, he was elected the youngest president of the regional Textile Association. Notably, these pathbreaking changes were not a flash in the pan—many of the businesses that emerged in that era still thrive today. And though he later exited the sector, in the success of these other enterprises, there remains even now an imprint of his spirit and leadership.

For the fact is that he saw business not in terms of mindless competition, but as communities to be nurtured and futures to be built.



Calm under pressure, logical in crises, and prodigiously analytical, he conceived of obstacles not as dead ends but as puzzles to work out.

TRT was determined to go beyond what merely worked. His plan was to distil the best of current practices and marry them to the next generation of technical standards. That mindset—act decisively, adapt constantly—became the hallmark of his style. Calm under pressure, logical in crisis, and prodigiously analytical, he conceived of obstacles not as dead ends but as puzzles to work out.

‘There’s always a way,’ he would quip, and then proceed to find it, piece by piece, step by step, breaking down the complex into accomplishable components. ‘Let’s *solve* the problem,’ was his slogan for colleagues, refusing to accept anything less. And he was uncommonly good at it.

In fact, one of TRT’s earliest appearances in the press came in the mid-1980s when he became the youngest person to obtain massive support from a government lending agency to finance his entry into textiles. Given his age and newness, he went into that meeting an unlikely candidate. Yet he emerged a winner. Having prepared exhaustively and demonstrated that he knew what he was talking about, he had persuaded a panel of seasoned lenders of his mettle.

Another secret of TRT’s success was his capacity to build committed teams. Years before, when

setting up the ice factory with his friend, the latter had been nervous. What if it all failed? ‘If there’s a loss,’ he assured him, ‘whatever little I have, we will share.’ It was a statement of confidence, but reflected much more, that partnership and trust underpinned all that he touched.

In 1988, when TRT was 30, he lost his father. Instinctively, unasked, and without the slightest hesitation, he stepped up, becoming a parental force for his siblings. His brothers were ensconced in the business and empowered to do their best, in line with their interests and talents. Every Sunday, the brothers would meet, with tasks discussed and then assigned according to each person’s strengths. For, as in engineering, he believed that no matter how brilliant any single component is, a healthy system needs every part to function in consonance. He was not keen on shining individually; what mattered was the triumph of the collective.

He would lead from the front, yes, but was incapable of ever thinking in the singular. His key word was always ‘us’, not ‘me’. This was not management philosophy. It was the very *raison d’être* for everything he accomplished—as a family man, business icon, and later, a champion of the environment.



With Sanjiv Bajaj.
Vankusawade Wind Park, Satara, 2001





Suzlon Wind Turbine Assembly Unit,
Padubidri

Importantly, recognition and fame did not alter these traits; on the contrary, they reinforced them. Often, in rural parts where he worked during his wind energy days, TRT and his team would not have access to hotels.

Houses would be rented in villages, with everyone sharing rooms and facilities. An associate came back late once and, in pure exhaustion, went to sleep on the kitchen counter. Not long after, he was gently nudged awake by TRT, who asked him to use his own bed instead. Similarly, in the mid-2000s, while the press eulogised him as a Forbes billionaire, the same man did not hesitate to wait

outside a roadside restroom with an umbrella for his driver on a rainy afternoon.

This down-to-earth quality meant that he earned profits of a different type too: the unconditional devotion and respect of his colleagues. That associate who slept on the kitchen counter remained a part of the team until TRT's passing and is in his post to this day. As is the driver. For in every business he created, TRT widened the range of its beneficiaries. He sparked prosperity, generated motivation, and led by example. At every turn, he prioritised people over numbers or the cut-throat arithmetic of commerce.

In every business he created, TRT widened the range of its beneficiaries.



Led by example





Suzlon Headquarters, One Earth,
Pune, 2015

8000 families

Of course, those who knew him were never surprised by this; for he possessed a magical gift for forming connections. As a boy, he had attracted friends and admirers by the legion. Now, as an entrepreneur, this quality was only burnished further. At every project site and office inauguration, team members would hope for a photograph with him. Many understandably assumed they might not get the opportunity. After all, he was a busy man. But to general surprise, he would invite everyone close, identifying them by name or recognising their departmental roles, even asking about their families.

It was a matter of perpetual amazement how he recalled so many faces and people, even if he'd met them only once or in passing. But he did. For, his employees were to him part of an 8000-strong acquired family, never a mere human-resource statistic. And in those moments of connection, he

made people feel seen, valued, and remembered. His warmth stayed with the wider team long after the click of the camera. Why, even at the height of recognition, TRT retained the distinct charisma that his elders in Rajkot had once noticed.

*It was simply
who he was, a
special man, whose
greatest investment
was always in
relationships.*



A custodian, not a proprietor

There are leaders who run companies, and there are those who feel personally responsible for every life within them. TRT was unambiguously the latter. When a core team member's thirteen-year-old son faced a sudden and serious health crisis in Rajkot in 2001, TRT was in Germany. Distance changed nothing. 'Move him to Mumbai even if you need to charter a helicopter,' he instructed. The child underwent life-saving surgery, and throughout his convalescence, the Tanti family remained present, bringing home-cooked meals, covering every expense, staying until the crisis had fully passed.

Another episode touched an even greater segment of employees. One Diwali, during some years of

financial difficulty, TRT discovered that festive bonuses had been withheld. His face tightened. 'Why didn't you tell me earlier?' Too many people depended on these payments. Without further ado, he made calls, liquidated investments, and ensured every bonus was paid. When a colleague expressed concern that he had sold some shares that were in his children's names, he grabbed a piece of paper. 'This,' he said, pointing to quickly scribbled calculations, 'is my original investment in the company. Every rupee beyond this I will give back to this company and its people.' At the end of the day, he visualised himself as a custodian, not a proprietor who cared only for self interest.





With Rahul Bajaj,
Vankusawade Wind Park, Satara, 1999

Win customers for life

It wasn't just those working with him who developed a sense of loyalty to TRT; it was also his customers. Clients, from the smallest to the most established, had direct access to him, and he'd personally examine their worries and assuage their concerns.

His philosophy was clear. The job, he told a junior went beyond 'selling a product and conducting a transaction'; it was to win customers for life and make them partners in the company's growth. Business, too, was never about merely delivering a product—it was about delivering value. He conducted himself more like a trustee than a vendor, building up a culture of value-driven service.

The result was that he became one of those special business leaders loved by his clients. They sought

him out for commercial advice, to settle disputes, and consulted him even on personal matters. Some also speak of occasions when they received better terms from competing firms but opted to stay with him, because he represented business of a higher calibre.

This affection also showed in other ways. Much later, during that phase of financial crisis, his vendors and some customers picked up equity in his company, instead of seeking cash payments. It was partly due to faith in his leadership. But equally, it was a result of commitment to the man he was. TRT had always been there for them, and so they rallied together for *him*. For him, in tough times, this injected a sense of invigoration beyond description and increased his recognition of the faith that was placed in him. It was a triumph of his people-centric approach.





Indeed, despite his brilliance as an engineer and strategist, his greatest strength remained his humanity. This often manifested in his attention to detail. When he took the now historic decision to enter the wind energy sector in mid-1990s, he shifted his business to Pune. He could conveniently have transferred all his staff by handing out relocation packages. But no. TRT went out of his way to ease the migration of as many as eighty households.

He took it upon himself to ensure that the children of relocating employees were admitted to good schools. One of his brothers was personally tasked with exploring options, establishing contacts, and securing admissions. Housing was arranged, apartments identified and then rented. The entire process was designed around a core principle: that safeguarding these families was not incidental to the move but central to it. It was an expensive

undertaking, but for TRT, it was non-negotiable. His team was an extended family—and in his view, families moved together. That same spirit expressed itself every year at Suzlon's annual employee events, where families were always invited, regardless of occasion or location.

'I don't want to see smiles only on my team's faces,' he would remark. 'I want to see it on their loved ones' too.' What he was building was for them all.

In his approach to corporate culture too, he united the best of modern systems with the care and commitment of Indian family enterprises, creating a distinct work culture that was neither a mimicry of clinical Western models nor an old-world traditional arrangement. Instead, it was authentically his own. The consequences were wholly positive.

Professionals stayed with him their entire careers, and even in tough times, loyalty ran deep. As it still does.



Extended family



To TRT, an organisation was not a hierarchy of roles but a network united by purpose. His company was a living ecosystem of people whose dreams, welfare, and dignity mattered as much as performance. Those who worked with him remember him as a leader in the most elevated sense; one others *chose* to follow.

Meetings with him were never exercises in hierarchy. They were filled with debate, laughter, and learning. He loved being challenged and encouraged debate, convinced that progress depended on a healthy exchange of ideas.

‘Don’t just agree with me,’ he would urge. ‘Convince me!’ It was not a performance of openness. It was a genuine invitation – and those who took him up on it found he meant every word. His working style was empowering in the deepest sense: he would incubate a team, build it, ignite their capabilities and then trust them to follow through.

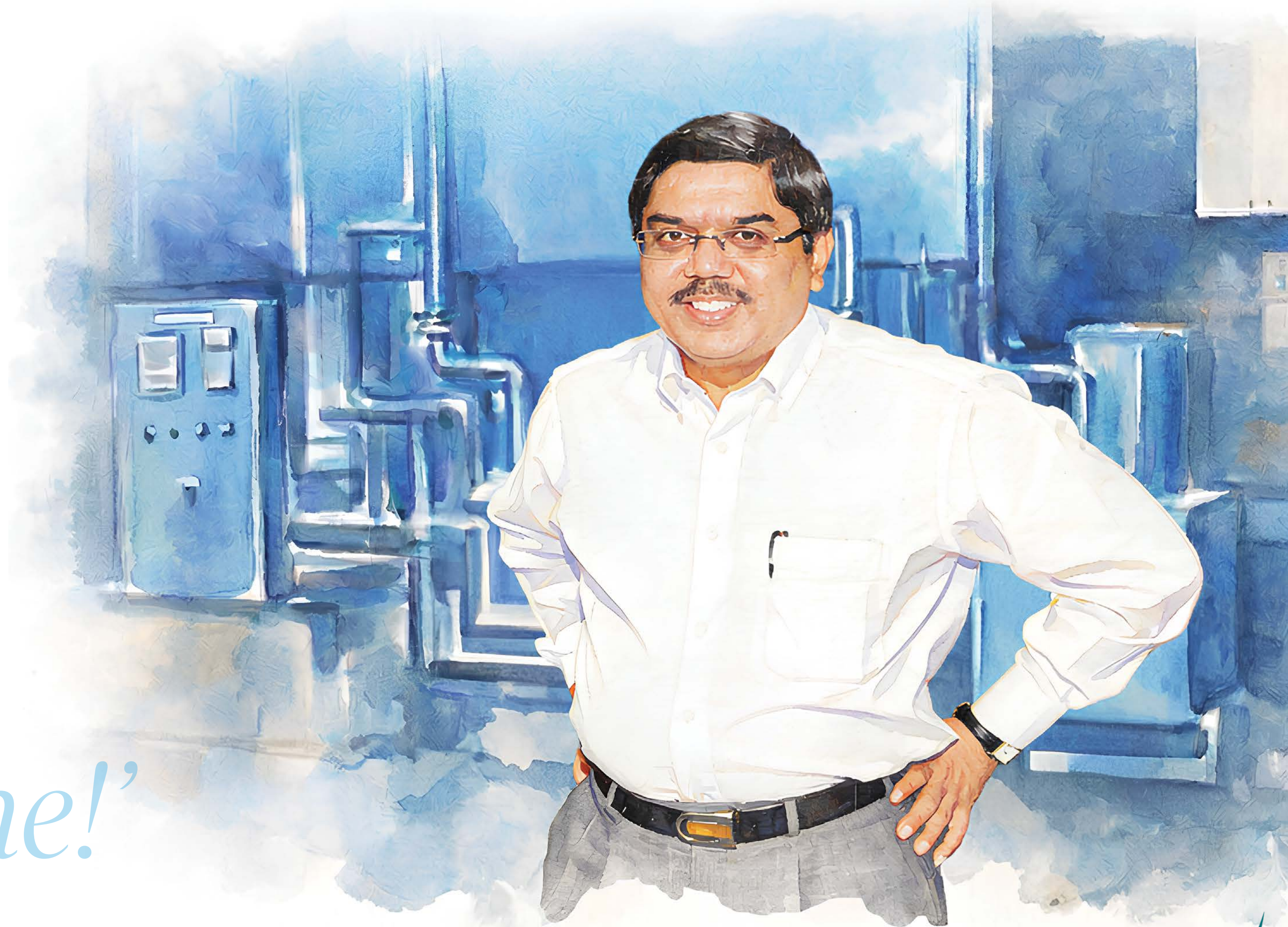
Naturally, TRT was never a micro-manager. One story captures this perfectly. An executive once, unexpectedly, needed to authorise a security worth

₹200 crore to secure permits, an amount well above his formal authority to sanction. With TRT unreachable due to travel, and time running out, the executive took the call and signed. When he later explained his decision to TRT, he said: ‘I asked myself what you would have done to secure ₹28,000 crore worth of business. The answer was clear.’ TRT listened, reflected for a moment, and replied: ‘Even if you had made the wrong call, I would have stood by your decision.’

To him, the freedom to take well-informed risks independently was central to inculcating leadership. And mistakes, if they occurred, were part of the process, never a reason to curb freedom or erode confidence.

Often, in fact, employees spoke of achieving far more than they had imagined they could, because he had a gift for unlocking their potential. As he often said: ‘We may be a bit slower if we go together, but we’ll still go together.’ Put simply, TRT believed in a leadership of positivity, and held an unshakable faith in every human being’s potential.

‘Convince me!’





Suzlon Generator Manufacturing Unit,
Chakan

When he encountered a good, solid idea, he could move at the pace of lightning, while often, even the policy ecosystem, with its many levers, took its own time.

TRT was not infallible, and he was the first to acknowledge it. Like many a powerful personality, some of his strongest character traits could occasionally become his Achilles' heel. For instance, he was a phenomenally decisive man, but his faith in rapid decisions could have others scrambling to keep pace.

When he encountered a good, solid idea, he could move at the pace of lightning, while often, even the policy ecosystem, with its many levers, took its own time. The result was a man perpetually operating several steps ahead of the world around him, which

brought its own particular challenges. He also took on immense responsibilities, rarely pausing to consider their weight. After all, with his enthusiasm, energy, and drive, he never feared a challenge.

If anyone argued that he was troubling himself, he would flash a mischievous smile, only to continue powering on. To him, it was merely another issue to tackle, but to his well-wishers, it caused genuine worry for his health and well-being. For all that, however, his iron resolve served as a lifelong armour, helping him navigate crises and difficulties with grit and willpower.



Energy & drive



This was most visible as he navigated choppy waters in the 2010s. Everyone from his colleagues to the wider world was amazed by his buoyancy. There were those who wrote him off, and in the press, a great deal was said beyond his control, much of it unflattering. But as always, the man from Rajkot defied his critics, emerging victorious against all odds.

Discomfort and obstacles had never unnerved him. In his usual style, TRT utilised the crisis to rebrand, recraft, and reinvent. Where others predicted an imminent collapse, he approached it as his rebirth, a stronger incarnation.

When asked once how he remained so unyieldingly optimistic, the Windman offered a liquid metaphor. Water, he noted, could run eternally. It could flow around rocks, over cliffs, sometimes gently, and sometimes with magnificent force. But you had to keep moving; to creatively adapt according to the terrain, even when it was hostile. That is all one could truly control; one's actions.

So, he applied every fibre of his being to fortify what he had built. And in the end, after a few tough but determined years, he prevailed.

Where others saw decline, he saw an opportunity to reshape and stabilise what he had created – drawing on experience, discipline, and persistence, and through this steady effort, the business today has returned to the pink of health.

It might have surprised observers, but not those who knew him. After all, as a colleague notes,

‘TRT did not accept failure. It was simply not in his books to fail.’





By his sixties, Tulsi Tanti was one of India's most esteemed business leaders, and a man the world recognised for his contributions to more than one sector.

He had won awards, engaged with presidents and prime ministers, and not only built several successful businesses, but also steered the most consequential of them through a period of significant challenge – emerging stronger on the other side.

He was not merely an Indian entrepreneur who went global; he was a global thinker rooted in the Indian experience. His worldview had great depth, and, like a lifelong student, he kept learning and soaking up new ideas. Wherever he travelled, from China to Brazil, he carried with him the

self-assurance of a man who knew where he came from, and also where the world was headed. He also remained receptive, listening as keenly as he spoke, whether at the United Nations or in a trade conference.

For his nation, he was a proud ambassador: global investors visiting his facilities were struck by the sophisticated technology, innovation, and world-class design. TRT's sense of probity was also legendary. When he once acquired a foreign company, most of their order book was committed to a competitor. Without waiting for the latter to reach out, he picked up the phone to assure this rival corporation's CEO that every commitment would be honoured; that their supply chain was not at risk.



With Bill Clinton,
Clinton Global Initiative Conference,
New York, 2007

Global thinker





*Son's Graduation,
Keele University, Staffordshire, UK,
2006*

A pen, a wallet, and a belt

At the end of the day, though, what mattered the most to him was his principles. They had guided him since his earliest days in Rajkot and Surat, and remained with him throughout.

In the mid-2000s, when his son graduated, TRT gave him three gifts: a pen, a wallet and a belt. And while there was paternal affection, TRT also intended to convey a message.

The pen was for his son to write his destiny, and represented responsibility, a commitment to everyone he worked with. The wallet stood for the proper management of resources, as also a symbol of generosity. And the belt was a reminder to maintain good health, avoiding excess in every sense. It wasn't lofty advice for its own sake; he always walked the talk when it came to his principles.

Towering achievements

What is most amazing about him, though, was how, despite his towering achievements, TRT never showed the slightest tendency towards self-importance.

He took his work seriously and pursued excellence with vigour, certainly. But no airs were assumed, nor did he show the faintest hint of hubris. Everyone saw him chiefly as a father figure who always, *always* had their back. He himself, of course, played down every encomium. When praise

was directed at him, he dismissed it with quiet bewilderment, as if to ask what was remarkable about simply being a decent person. To him, it was the most natural thing in the world. There was no other way to be.



*For family,
he always
had time.*

With age, meanwhile, aspects of his personal life were also changing. All his life, he lived in rented homes. It was an article of faith that one had to always be ready, to move when opportunity beckoned. Setting down roots risked sapping that vitality and momentum.

Indeed, it was only after twenty-five years in Pune, during the Covid-19 crisis, that he finally purchased a home, chiefly to secure his wife's

future. She had been his constant companion all these years, and he felt he owed her a house, her only ask in all this time.

He also developed the most endearing bonds with his grandchildren. His family was thoroughly amused once when they walked into a room to find the Windman of India squatting on the floor, trying desperately to paint his granddaughter's toenails.



His phone, meanwhile, was full of comical selfies he took on hikes with his grandson, in whom he saw a good deal of himself. For family, he was never busy; his daughter-in-law recalls knocking on his door one afternoon, asking if he had a few minutes. He, at that time grappling with business difficulties, shut his laptop, smiled, and said, 'I always have time'.

The world saw a leader and pathbreaking entrepreneur in Tulsi Tanti, but to his loved ones, he was always a cherished family man.

His daughter recalls that every call from her or her brother was answered, irrespective of the hour or the country he happened to be in.

His demise was a shattering event, condoled by everyone from India's Prime Minister to titans of global industry.

In his final days, TRT began to chart out a future in which he would retire to Austria—his favourite European destination, to develop a health spa. Few believed this likely: he was too much of a visionary and too committed to his calling. His leadership was urgently needed at both a national and global level. He was, everyone felt, the last person to withdraw from the scene. His perennial attitude was: 'Let me try something else, do more, do different things'. He stayed committed to this drive; until in October 2022, he passed away unexpectedly. He had told his daughter the previous

night that he wanted to discuss something with her; that he would ring her soon. Unfortunately, the call never came. His demise was a shattering event, condoled by everyone from India's Prime Minister to titans of global industry. His family, his core leadership team, and employees all stepped up to march on with his compass in hand, as they marked their presence at his funeral. In what would have made him beam with pride, they held each other as one team, across functions and across boundaries, with his brothers leading the way as a dignified change of guard.





‘How would TRT have handled this?’

On the one hand, there is no doubt that he left an enormous vacuum. But on the other, it somehow felt like he was still with everyone, in spirit. It helped that he had set in motion systems and processes to carry his vision forward.

He had raised the sails, and all his colleagues had to do was focus on steering the ship ahead. There would be hurdles, of course, as there always are.

But if ever they were in doubt, all they had to do was ask the question: ‘How would TRT have handled this?’

His leadership was more than an ephemeral success.

It had birthed a veritable business culture and a mindset. In every room he entered, and in every life he touched, he left something behind, something that could never be taken back, only passed forward. And in that lies his immortality. In that resides even today the essence of Tulsi Tanti.







CHAPTER 2

THE IMPACT

TRT's name is synonymous with both India's renewable energy revolution and the international crusade against climate change. It is almost as if this was all meant to be.

Ever so often, a single individual's response to adversity and crisis reshapes more than their own destiny. Instead it alters without exaggeration, the very trajectories of nations, economies and industries. The story of Tulsi Tanti is one such account. Today, his legacy is among the most transformative in renewable energy history; is associated with innovation, resilience, and a dynamic reinvention. At present, the evidence of what he built is visible everywhere: an iconic headquarters for his company in Pune, and towering turbine installations around the globe. His name is synonymous with both India's renewable energy revolution and the global crusade

against climate change. It is almost as if this was all meant to be. The fact, though, is that things began far more simply. And TRT's genesis as a wind energy pioneer was almost unexpected. For at the start of the journey there were no boardrooms or blueprints. There were no specialists expounding on strategy, waiting to be executed by legions of expert technicians.

On the contrary, at the outset there was just one man confronting a simple, irksome business problem, dreaded by Indian manufacturers even to this day: the all-too-familiar 'power cut.'





With Jeff Thomases, Suavelle Group, USA
Furnishing Fabric Plant, Ankleshwar, 1998

In the early 1990s, TRT was seriously invested in the textiles business in south Gujarat. He had built thriving operations, and his ventures were overtaking major competitors, innovating for Indian conditions, marrying efficiency with international quality standards and an impeccable reputation for reliability.

Employing hundreds of workers and supporting numerous supplier businesses, on the face of it, things looked wholly positive. By 1993, in fact, his textile enterprise would also be successfully listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange. Yet for all the laurels and sophisticated processes in

place, there was one adversary he constantly found himself up against: unpredictable power supply and its punishing costs. At his factory in Ankleshwar, energy limitations meant that all units were forced to suspend activities one full day per week. Electricity consumed up to thirty per cent of revenue, with the figure climbing year after year. Even as he achieved higher profits, power tariff increases scraped away all prospects for growth.

It was somewhat like running faster and faster only to find yourself in the same spot. And for anyone who knew him, staying put was an anathema.

This was a man aiming for the stars, and he wasn't going to let a shortage of electricity get in his way.



Prospects for growth





In his quest to keep the factory lights on and machines running, he began exploring solutions. Always a bona fide problem-solver, he began by probing the energy issue from multiple angles. He studied technologies, tested solutions, and worked through possibilities with the systematic patience of the engineer he was.

One avenue led to a tie-up with an Indian company to develop a gas-fired engine and two prototypes tested over a year, with satisfactory results. But in the course of examining their viability, he also turned to other options, including one that would

prove the most consequential decision of his life. Wind energy.

A key attraction here was that the authorities had begun offering a modest incentive if a company could generate power through renewable means. Such units would be exempt from that mandatory one-day weekly power cut, which paused business activities. It was an edge, in other words, of one full day of additional productivity over competitors. True to his personality, this was all the opening TRT needed.

In 1994, in line with his broader quest for a lasting energy solution, he decided to install two wind turbines. At the time, few would have imagined this practical decision would alter the course of India's history.



*First Suzlon Nacelle Dispatch,
Bamanbor, 1996*

Exploring solutions



Looking back now, the decision seems almost surreal. Neither he nor anyone in his circle had ever seen a wind turbine before. When the order was placed with a European supplier, it was so small that the latter refused to deliver it. TRT had to manage pick up, transportation, and assembly

of the parts on site. The best he could do was negotiate with the supplier to send a supervisor to the site. But even so, it was like putting together a complex mechanical puzzle with an illegible instruction manual.

TRT, ever the engineer, fascinated by novel technologies, met the challenge with gusto. Taking things into his own hands, he gathered his team, and together they drew up a plan to install and make the turbines functional.

Components were hauled across rough terrain and missing parts fabricated locally. Against all odds, the turbines were successfully commissioned, the documentation completed, and the tax benefit and extra day of productivity secured, well within the mandated deadline. But as the blades began to turn, they did more than power his factory. They had sparked an idea that would go on to make history. Or as TRT remarked to a colleague,

‘Wind energy is the future. We have an opportunity to do great things here.’

This moment, unglamorous, logistically complicated, cobbled together with improvised parts and a borrowed supervisor would prove to be the seed of everything that followed.





Having installed the turbines, his exhausted team and brothers returned to get on with the thriving textiles business. To their utter amazement, TRT welcomed them with his characteristic charm and an audacious announcement—‘We will now enter the wind energy business.’

With his uncanny capacity to see the big picture and seize potential from the slimmest avenues, TRT soon realised that he had chanced on something pathbreaking. After all, his struggle was hardly unique. Across India, thousands of manufacturers faced the same difficulty. From Tamil Nadu’s automotive factories to pharmaceutical plants in Andhra Pradesh, the liberalisation boom meant that demand for power was rising steeply. A helpless dependence on coal-based power was like being in a straitjacket, while the system of centralised, state-run power distribution meant manufacturers had

no control over energy tariffs either. The country’s hopes at large risked being impeded, precisely at a time when India was primed for a great leap into the future. The situation was crying for a remedy.

For TRT, of course, every challenge was an invitation to think harder, go further, and find a better way. Without delay, he, therefore, decided to turn his one-man solution into an answer for many. He saw how things were, but also what they could become with vision and vigour. He had invested in wind to address a personal predicament, but saw that the process could redress a *systemic* problem. Indeed, from a business perspective, wind energy could become a national and global opportunity. And Suzlon Energy was founded in 1995. In retrospect, it looks like the work of destiny, but at the time, it was an act of rare courage.

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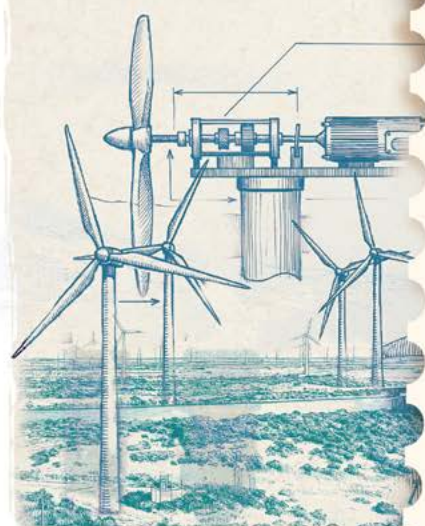


Generator Manufacturing Unit,
Chakan

Seize potential



India's energy capacity
In 1992 → 42 MW
In 2022 → 42000 MW



TRT's conviction
paid off ..

Vast portion of this was
thanks to Suzlon, and
the man behind it.

Where most individuals of his standing would have looked to consolidate and safeguard their assets, TRT was willingly, fervently opting for a challenge. When his decision to transition to wind became known, contemporaries and peers were astonished. Why give up so much hard-won success in textiles for a leap in the dark, in a sector in its infancy? But for TRT this was precisely the point, he had faith in his plan, and confidence in himself and his team. If the sector did not exist, he was determined to create it. In fact, over the coming decades he helped fashion a guidebook for those to follow, transforming an uncharted space into a still-expanding field of progressive opportunity.

What he was building was not just a business but the beginning of an era of accessible and affordable wind energy across developed, developing, and emerging markets of the world.

To be clear, TRT's pivot was made with great deliberation. He spent months analysing data, studying turbine specifications, and calculating returns on investment.

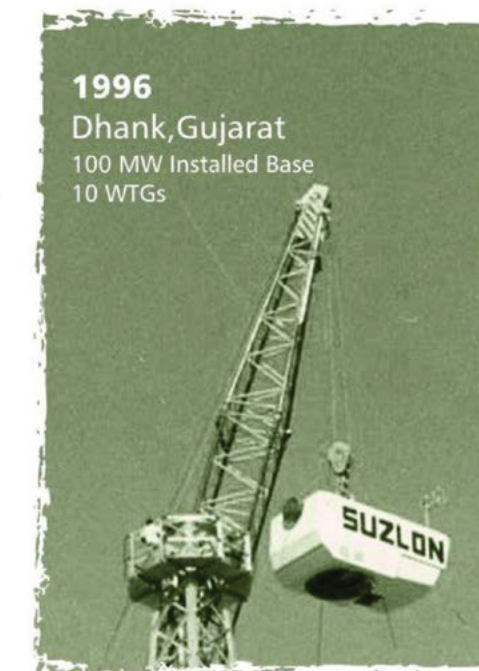
Ably supported by his family and team, he marched ahead into uncharted territories. His brothers were the wind beneath his wings, giving him the confidence to soar higher. He consulted many an engineer, parleyed with experts in Europe, and travelled overseas to study operations. The future Windman also investigated every alternative: solar, hydropower, biomass. Each had

significant limitations. Wind, he was now convinced, showed the greatest promise. The technology had a proven record in Europe, costs were reasonable, and India's coastal areas offered more than adequate scope. It was a leap of faith, at a time when policymakers too were yet to grasp the process. But he was unafraid, and he pressed ahead, without hesitation.

Only TRT, with his almost intimidating appetite for risk, could marshal the requisite boldness. In the worst case, if the plan did not work out, he could return to other ventures. But if his agenda did live up, his efforts would not only empower countless businesses, they would also contribute to the global energy future. He had already proved himself with panache as an entrepreneur.

Now he aimed to contribute to his nation and make a difference in the world at large. Wind, after all, promised not only to power factories and his country but also many nations as they stood at the threshold of the twenty-first century. And his confidence bore

fruit: where in 1992 India's wind energy capacity stood at a microscopic 42 MW, by 2022 – the year TRT passed away – it had crossed 42,000 MW. Today, India is the fourth-largest wind energy market in the world with 56,000 MW of installed capacity. And a vast portion of this was thanks to one man's conviction and the impact of his vision.





WIND PROMISED
TO POWER
FACTORIES AND ALSO
PROGRESS





World Economic Forum, Davos,
January 2016

In building his wind energy venture, TRT exhibited tremendous leadership and ingenuity. He had little to go by in terms of sectoral precedents. The technology was largely alien to Indian settings, the supply chain was non-existent, and the market was yet to discover that it even needed the product. Most preferred safe, tried, and tested methods, viewing wind turbines as expensive curiosities. On one occasion, he was even asked: ‘Does this fan generate electricity or use it?’ But TRT was no defeatist; he would laugh, and repeatedly explain the mechanics, and convince his interlocutors.

With his trademark optimism, he made the task look deceptively easy. Yet the fact is that in developing the architecture for a nascent space, he was juggling the most exacting responsibilities. His never-say-die attitude was an asset. Where suppliers fell short in providing the knowledge, he’d learn with his team and work with the suppliers to develop it. If support systems were missing, he would create them from the ground

up. And if few in India understood wind, he would shine a light so bright as to make it difficult to ignore. There was also a challenge to build the required infrastructure for manufacturing these precise and technologically sensitive turbines, especially the aerodynamically challenging, oversized turbine rotor blades ranging up to 60 metres or more. The task was entrusted to his architect brother and his team of engineers to build factories to the required specifications, and TRT ensured that they met the best global standards.

Simply put, where others highlighted roadblocks, TRT actively chose to fashion a springboard over them.

Propelling all this was his personal grit and resolve. Starting with twenty employees and modest capital from the sale of family property, he rented a facility and commenced the trailblazing work of building India’s wind energy sector.



Trailblazing work





This was his differentiator in a world that thrived on racing ahead of competitors by any means.

By 1997, he had signed his maiden manufacturing agreement with a German group. It was also a cultural experiment of sorts: five engineers who spoke no English communicated via a lone translator with his team! A great deal had to be done, from correct crane placements to sealing off the structure's upper vents to bar the entry of pigeons. A lesser man might have been daunted by the sheer magnitude of the task before him, but the process energised TRT.

Shortly before, he also passed his first test: a government petrochemicals concern contracted him to set up a turbine. His colleagues recall how they were required to complete the project by the end of that financial year.

Working tirelessly, he ensured that the installation was in place and ready to go two days before the deadline. What happened next has become something of a legend. Another company was also setting up a turbine and was in a panic about delivering in time.

Without hesitation, TRT and his team went over with all their resources and helped these competitors meet their target. This was an unheard-of action in any sector, and it demonstrated that business for him was not just about the bottom line or reputation, but about everyone crossing the finish line together. This was his differentiator in a world that thrived on racing ahead of competitors by any means.



*Suzlon's 1st Integrated Plant,
Tianjin, China, 2007*

Led together





An industry waiting to be nurtured

The episode of helping a competitor was not an anomaly. It revealed, right at the onset, the visionary in TRT: He was not building a company in a sector. He was building the sector itself – and rivals were not opponents to be defeated but colleagues from the same field, part of the same ecosystem that would flourish together or limit each other.

Cutting out the competition might yield short-term gains, but he was never interested in the short term. He saw wind as transforming India's energy consumption in toto. In his mind, even as he built Suzlon, he was equally developing an *ecosystem*. And rivals, who for him were more like colleagues, were part of that ecosystem.

From the very outset, he was determined to also develop indigenous technology, proving that Indians could design, build, and maintain complex systems at the highest global standards. Suzlon aspired to and would soon become an Indian entity that didn't just import and install turbines, but also understood, adapted, innovated, and *competed* with established European giants.

As a commentator said of TRT: 'He doesn't speak their language, but he speaks business.' For an Indian to take the global business community by storm wasn't merely about TRT's success; it also heralded that his country had arrived and how.



His scope of activity over the next years ranged from liaising with policymakers and building stakeholder networks, to visiting project sites around the world, and working with designers and engineers on efficient technology. His collaborations entailed engaging with hundreds, if not thousands, of people. In retrospect, it is bewildering how one man managed all that he did with such zeal. But he was indefatigable.

In the 1990s, he had his eye on 2050; it was that world he was shaping, while creating systems in the present. This is exactly what enthused him about his mission, that it wasn't business in its humdrum sense, but business for higher ends.

His sincerity in this regard was patent to all. In fact, all his life, ministers and bureaucrats admired this about TRT.

In meetings, he spoke as a voice for the principle of renewable energy, rather than the chairperson of a company. Competitors in the field too vested faith in him because when he lent his voice, it was for all of them and never for personal interest. At times, he was sought out for strategic counsel by rivals. Setbacks did not alarm him; he took them only as a sign that he ought to address the problem more creatively.

Growth, however, is rarely linear

Even as he picked up new clients, in 1998, TRT's installations faced their first serious challenge in the form of a catastrophic cyclone that left the majority of Suzlon's turbines in Gujarat ruined. The incident raised concerns about wind energy's viability in general, and many feared this was an existential crisis. Instead, he saw in the crisis an opportunity to do even better. Bringing in the best minds from abroad and studying global data, including that from NASA, he established the root cause of the unprecedented devastation.

He directed his team not to merely reinstall the turbines but rebuild and reinforce them. In less than a year, systems were operational again. But what caused a sensation was less about the speed of Suzlon's recovery from this catastrophe than in TRT's manner of handling it.

For he knew he had to restore confidence in wind energy again. As his then head of marketing recalls, customers received not just product replacements, but product upgrades, at no extra cost, and Suzlon actually *expanded* its customer base.

The professionalism with which he reassured clients, the sincerity that marked every interaction, and his integrity in honouring commitments, these established his reputation as a leader who stood firmly behind his promises. One colleague later observed that faith in the wind energy sector began to accrue from this moment.

And TRT's place as the father of the sector was also forged at this juncture.





Validation from the top echelons of Indian industry

Interestingly, not long after, he received an order that would propel him to the next level as a major national player: the decision by one of India's most respected automobile company to invest in wind turbines. TRT had sought an appointment with the chairman and was granted 30 minutes, as a courtesy. But his approach was a masterclass in how he won over even the only curious kind of clients.

To start with, he did his homework: he studied the company's finances, made his calculations, and grasped the issues they faced. When he walked into the meeting, therefore, he did not offer a product, he presented a solution. He spent the first half introducing wind energy, and the second citing the client's own balance sheet to show how much revenue could be gained through wind. TRT's passion and vision quickly captured that seasoned industrialist's attention. The clock ticked

on until what was meant to be a short product pitch transformed into a four-and-a-half-hour intense brainstorming, by the end of which, he had an order for 28 turbines. Coming from a marquee business house, this was validation from the top echelons of Indian industry.

Crucially, once they invested, the company went further, bringing their ancillaries into the fold as well. Over the next three years, TRT enabled the company to go fully green, an unprecedented moment in India's corporate history, proving that massive enterprises could have energy independence.

Hereafter, doors started to open for him more promptly. Where wind was once dismissed as a non-starter, within five years, he had established it as a powerful contender.





TRT's personal genius was critical to this growth. Among his most inspired innovations was the concept of the 'Wind Park'. One persistent hurdle in popularising renewable energy was that there was little for customers to see, only projections and possibilities, which bred scepticism and uncertainty. Some were worried about the very basics: even if they purchased turbines, they had no suitable land on which to install them. After all, wind sites required scientific vetting that could span up to five years before a location was certified. Asking a customer to wait half a decade for the blades to start turning, and for the investment to pay off, was simply out of the question. It was in addressing this difficulty that he and his team, after much research, many memos, and countless whiteboard sessions, arrived at a solution: build the wind farms first. Instead of finding customers and then seeking turbine sites, he decided to develop the infrastructure in advance.

It was an ambitious move; locations had to be identified, wind capacity measured, land acquired, permits obtained, and cable grids laid. Even the width of roads mattered, to transport turbines and blades to the relevant sites. Not to forget, the large capital that the company had to invest for an extended period till the customers came onboard. Undeterred, TRT and his team persevered. And the effort paid off.

When he went to customers, he could point to an existing setup already capable of supplying a fixed measure of power, at defined prices.

Suzlon itself was envisioned not as a company selling turbines but as a one-stop *solution* for Indian industry's energy needs, akin, for example, to an apartment complex with everything from gardens to parking already in place. All the buyers had to do was sign on. To incentivise early adopters, TRT even guaranteed an assured power supply, come what may. It was not bravado: his calculations, accounting for weather patterns and natural variations, provided a clear sense of what he could promise. And because he was a man who always kept his promises, Suzlon earned tremendous confidence. Why, by 2003, he would establish Asia's largest wind park in Maharashtra; just over ten years later, it was surpassed by another of Suzlon's wind parks in Gujarat, also set up under his guidance.



It was a bold move, but one that worked; in fact, competitors also soon started developing wind farms of their own. He saw it as a win for the broader renewables concept in India. If anything, he was delighted that wind parks were now transforming how the country experienced renewable energy.





Asia's largest wind park





1st 1 MW Generator

In the same period, he was also busy with his next milestone: introducing India to its first 1 megawatt wind generator. It was a mark of his foresight that he bet on designing and manufacturing this at a time when the market cared to look no further than 300 kilowatts. Even in Europe, the 1 MW turbine had only just been introduced; TRT was determined to bring this avant-garde technology to India at once.

Of course, he understood that the infrastructure to support it was absent. But he also had faith in his own capacity to address the gap. And so, in 2003

Suzlon went ahead full steam with the project. Challenges duly arrived: within a month of the first installation, the turbine collapsed, with the hub cracking and a blade plunging to the ground.

To his distraught team TRT's response was characteristic. **'There is so much we thought would go wrong, but only a few factors did. So now it is easy to fix the problem. We'll do it again, and this time we'll get it right.'** It wasn't words of consolation: within a few weeks, with him personally guiding the team, the turbine was up again, running successfully.

Suzlon's engineers were delighted, their confidence boosted for projects of even bigger scale. Inspired by their success, they were now raring to go.



India's first turbine CPU

Suzlon became the first Indian company to pioneer in-house CPU development for wind turbines.



The company's 2005 IPO, similarly, was a massive success, oversubscribed 15 times

Global Player
1GW > 5GW > 11GW > 20+GW

In 2000, TRT also oversaw the manufacturing of Suzlon's first indigenous turbine. It was a landmark moment. He had always been clear that Suzlon must become a genuine global player, and that required developing its own technology rather than assembling imported designs.

One particularly significant challenge, lay in developing the control panel unit, the very 'brain' of a wind turbine, in-house. Software development was relatively new in India, and the team was hesitant. But his belief never faltered. Before long, Suzlon became the first Indian company to pioneer in-house CPU development for wind turbines.

Hereon, they could report on machine data as well as real-time performance, making Suzlon one of the world's first adopters of real-time global monitoring, now a standard industry practice. The magnitude of the achievement cannot be understated: this was a time when the wind energy supply chain was concentrated in the Global North.

Even nuts and bolts used in turbines were imported from Europe. But with his team, he boldly catalysed a technological leap that would transform the sector and raise the worth and standing of Indian industry

globally. Over time, and under his stewardship, Suzlon began to source as much as possible within India. He actively hoped to develop pride in Indian products across the world and to earn global respect for the country's technology.

It is no surprise, then, that by 2006, Suzlon would rank among the world's leading five wind turbine generator manufacturers, a historic accomplishment for an entity barely a decade old. The company's 2005 IPO proved a massive success, oversubscribed fifteen times.



Meanwhile, that same year, its installations crossed the one-gigawatt (1 GW) mark, following this up with 5 GW by 2010, and the 11 GW milestone seven years later. Today, TRT's legacy includes over 21+ GW of worldwide wind energy installations, across seventeen countries, indicative of a *global* impact.

He always had faith that wind energy could help Indian businesses grow while reinforcing their competitive edge. He also believed that the same wind energy could power emerging and developed markets across the southern hemisphere just as it did for their counterparts in the north. In this, he was proven right, repeatedly.





Wind Farm Inaugration by
Late Shrimati J. Jayalalithaa, Sangneri, 2004

A particularly rewarding triumph came from the very industry where he had once been a leading player: textiles. He knew well how energy costs chipped away at the sector's viability in global markets. So, he was thrilled when his message resonated at Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu, the heart of India's hosiery industry.

Over time, these mills would almost completely adopt renewable energy, with over 1600 MW of wind energy installations and 350 MW of solar installations. With energy costs in check, today these factories account for fifty-five per cent of India's knitwear exports to the world. The region

even produces surplus, exportable electricity from wind alone. For TRT, Tiruppur became living proof of what he had been highlighting since the mid-1990s. Tamil Nadu, as a state, too, would emerge as an important node in the renewable energy network; having entered the state first in 1999, TRT and Suzlon would develop thirty-six per cent of its 7800 MW wind infrastructure.

Slowly but steadily, he was demonstrating that wind energy was here to stay, to grow, and ultimately, as he always believed, to reorder the world itself.

*Wind energy
was here
to stay*





Developing faith in wind energy was a constant work in progress.

As TRT evolved from an entrepreneur to a national and global leader, there were shifts in his role. Developing faith in wind energy was a constant work in progress, and his attention in this regard never flagged. Bankers, for instance, were at first hesitant to lend, given the fledgling state of the industry. So he took personal effort to communicate



and educate. At one point, he even flew a group in a helicopter to a wind park to offer an unimpeachable view of how the technology functioned. Businessmen, meanwhile, tended to think of renewables at best as tax-saving devices. But TRT's successes were proof that green energy held far greater promise; that renewables could supply

manufacturers with *all* their power needs over time. Viewed another way, he convinced them that investing in wind was not about meeting technical targets; it was akin to investing in their own futures. With policymakers, he argued for incentives and benefits for his clients and the sector, rather than for himself or his company.

And with small manufacturers, too, he encouraged to produce as many wind turbine components locally as possible, catalysing a supply chain that now serves global markets.





Clinton Global Initiative Conference,
New York, 2008

By the turn of the millennium, TRT had already built something remarkable, but his mind, as always, was reaching further.

He had always been a voracious reader, curious about everything, restless until he understood it fully. And one thread, in the year 2000, led him to a report on global warming that stopped him cold.

It warned that within half a century, parts of the world, among them the Maldives, a place he loved

deeply would simply cease to exist, consumed by rising seas. The effect was immediate and profound.

At a time when most of the world still regarded climate change as a distant and deniable concern, TRT recognized it for what it was – the defining challenge of the age. He did not arrive at this conclusion through activism or ideology. He arrived at it the way he arrived at every conviction: through data, through rigour, and through an unflinching willingness to act on what the evidence demanded.

The climate crisis was not coming; it was, he perceived, already here. He slipped most naturally into the role of becoming a climate warrior, well before that term entered general parlance.



Climate change





By 2005, when most of the business world still considered it a peripheral concern, he made climate a cornerstone of his mission.

In a system prompted by commercial calculations, he underlined a moral imperative. Or as he said to TIME magazine in 2007, the year he was honoured as a ‘Hero of the Environment,’ his goal was to ‘fix the problem.’

In pursuing this, TRT brought to the fore his distinct style. He was a regular at international forums, ranging from the UN Climate Change Conferences to the World Economic Forum; from assorted energy summits to sustainable development gatherings.

There was a plethora of partnerships, featuring stakeholders from the media to civic society. A collaboration with the Climate Group, for instance, inspired books laying out practical solutions for climate change. With BBC World, he produced ‘Nature’s Business’, a series that shifted the onus of climate action from individuals to corporations.

On CNN, ‘Eco Solutions’ reaching some 350 million households offered a global audience a concrete answer. One episode, ‘Save the Ice,’ won the best climate change reporting award in 2009. Meanwhile, at home, Suzlon’s Pure Air Lovers’ Society mobilised India’s largest online environmental community, drawing over a million citizens to pledge small, everyday actions. Throughout, TRT devoted considerable energy to winning over diverse stakeholders. With his gargantuan powers of persuasion, over the years, he would make enthusiastic converts out of many a climate sceptic.

There was no denying that this was a man who could convince almost anyone to join his cause through the irrefutable logic of facts and hard numbers, besides charm and persuasion.

What gave TRT his singular authority was the quality of his argument. Fear and alarm were not his instruments. He came armed with data, with proof, and with the unimpeachable credibility of a man who had already built what others were still only talking about.



For all that, however, he was under no illusions: awareness and good sentiments alone were inadequate. What the world needed was real *solutions*, and those, he knew, could only be delivered through economics. The strategic thinker and pragmatist in him recognised that climate action would never scale until it became *economically* viable. And that if the message had to travel beyond activist circles, virtue and guilt would only go so far.

His effort, therefore, was to deliver green energy as the most affordable option, and also the most ethical. Then alone would the cause receive a fillip. At Suzlon, the key question TRT asked was: ‘How can I make renewable energy affordable?’ Leveraging data and design with daring and

discipline, he pushed himself and his team to craft an answer.

At its core was his faith in the revolutionary potential of technology. Those who worked with him, in fact, recall his whiteboard sessions, with him thinking aloud and filling every inch of space with calculations and diagrams.

Could lighter blade materials reduce weight and increase the wind catchment area? Could smarter design unlock energy generation at sites previously considered unviable? No question was too granular, no possibility too incremental to be worth examining. It was this relentless, detail-level thinking that produced results the broader industry had not imagined.

In 2015, he took genuine pride in announcing that Suzlon’s 2.1 MW turbines were specifically designed to generate high energy output at low-wind sites, significantly expanding the reach of renewable energy.



Advocacy aside, TRT never lost sight of the *economic* architecture that cemented good ideas. Impact at scale demanded investment, and investment required policy clarity. So, he turned his energies to building the conditions under which capital could flow freely into the sector. He knew investors required both viability and visibility, and he delivered both, arriving at meetings armed with data and forecasts assembled with precision.

The results were telling: in 2007, Suzlon became the first Indian company to attract Foreign Direct Investment in the wind energy sector. It was a colossal endorsement, proof for the wider world that India's renewable energy ambitions were genuine.

Together with the success of Suzlon's IPO, his vision of moulding the entire sector into a pillar of the economy was taking shape. After all, he conceived

of his role more as an 'actionist' than an activist. He steered clear of doom-and-gloom scenarios and pie-in-the-sky solutions. What he articulated, instead, was a vision in which business and environmental responsibility were linked constructively. This solution-oriented view injected an air of much-needed positivity in conversations often mired in woe.

His great gift lay in proving to the world that these two principles need not at all be antithetical. What he stressed was a paradigm shift, and the world will always value him for it.

'Green business,' he noted, was 'good business.'

Actionist not an activist



Saving the world of tomorrow

Making TRT's work particularly effective was his credibility. On the one hand, his work at Suzlon was obvious. 'A single 1 MW wind turbine,' he noted, 'can prevent the emission of 1,600 tons of CO₂ each year,' generating energy to power 800 Indian households. To buttress his point, he walked the talk: by 2010, the installations Suzlon alone mounted were mitigating 8.5 million tons of CO₂ emissions; in 2022, the year of his demise, the figure climbed to 51 million tons, the equivalent of 4.3 billion trees absorbing CO₂, or of taking millions of cars off the road.

So, when he said that, 'Wind energy can and will play one of the most important roles in saving the world of tomorrow,' he did so with proof by his side. It also mattered that he was not a theorist delivering

abstract lectures; he spoke as a man of business, urging other entrepreneurs to play their role.

As he put it in 2009, when he became the first of only three Indians declared Champions of the Earth by the UNEP 'the future depends on entrepreneurs taking a leadership role.' To him, a green future would necessarily be heralded by technological innovations. And backing it all was his certainty that wind - clean, sustainable, infinite - held the key to India's and the world's transformation.

At the end of the day, among the everyday nitty-gritties of business, this remained his prime objective.





One Earth

By 2010, TRT gave physical expression to these ideas when he moved the Suzlon headquarters to a new space in Pune. Spread across ten acres, it was among the greenest corporate complexes in the world, winning several Indian and global awards for its sustainable design, innovative utility solutions and operations, becoming the subject of many a thesis for architecture and engineering students.

He viewed this campus as a manifesto for everything he represented in the war on climate change.

When he shared his vision for the campus with his architect brother, he was clear that he did not want another ‘glass box’. What he wanted was a building that breathed, existing in genuine harmony with its surroundings rather than in spite of them.

‘One Earth’, as it was christened, was to rise as the statement of an alternative vision. And the team delivered: this ground plus two level complex, built in a horizontal layout, ran entirely on renewable energy; it was an ecosystem on its own and did not emit waste or water in the external system, treating it all internally. Nearly ninety per cent of its spaces have access to natural lighting and ventilation; seventy per cent of its users witnessed the changing weathers outside and most of the building material was sourced locally.

Today, in effect, ‘One Earth’ is a self-sustaining reimagination of the modern workplace for its 2000 occupants. While constructing the campus, importantly, TRT ensured that the area’s biodiversity remained unchanged. Every tree was preserved, and water bodies were untouched so that birds and animals could retain their habitats. After the campus won global recognition, he expressed hope that this campus would serve as ‘inspiration and proof to others that it is possible, if we are really determined,’ to build a sustainable world.

Quite literally, through every brick, he cemented his mission. One Earth was not a monument to his success, but an invitation for others to follow.





With Shri Narendra Modi,
Vibrant Gujarat Summit, Gandhinagar, 2011

Make in India

Throughout his life, TRT was ahead of his time. He saw, for instance, the potential of wind energy while others scoffed. He addressed the climate crisis before most governments around the world had articulated even a rudimentary response. And equally, in what mattered to his home country, he foresaw India's rise prior to many in his generation. For instance, more than a decade and a half before 'Make in India' became Indian industry's mantra, he was already living its substance.

As far back as the 1990s, as noted before, he was clear that Suzlon would not merely manufacture turbines as per European design alone; it would develop its own technology customised to suit the wind regimes of every country they were installed in.

The reasoning was as practical as it was principled. Wind regimes in India, Brazil and South Africa bore

little resemblance to those in Europe. Imported technology, in any case, required tweaking; what worked in Europe did not in these countries, each with their own geographical peculiarities and climate.

He, therefore, urged an uncompromising emphasis on research and development, becoming that rare wind energy pioneer who, dismissing the convenience of readymade tech, built his own. It came with challenges, yes, but these only excited TRT. For instance, when Suzlon started exporting turbines, existing vessels could not carry them. His team had to work with designers to modify ship decks and containers capable of transporting the equipment overseas. Even basic logistics demanded painstaking innovation. But this was precisely the kind of problem that energised him – the kind that, once solved, left the entire industry better equipped than it had been before.



Additionally, to him, the work at Suzlon represented more than just one company's corporate milestones; it embodied India's emergence as a player in the global renewable energy sector. Or as he would state, with palpable pride: 'We don't just make turbines. We build confidence in India.' Indians, he proved, could design, build, and maintain technology at the best standards and of the most complex nature.

When a rival once remarked that India could never master blade design, TRT made no public rebuttal. He simply went ahead and mastered it. Within a few years, Suzlon was not only developing blades in India but supplying them to Europe. In 2002, barely seven years after the company's founding, Suzlon exported a blade to the United States, the first Indian company ever to do so. The milestones continued.

Suzlon became the first company in Asia to establish a world-class blade-testing facility, a capability rarely found outside Europe in those days.

Testing standards for blades remain among the most exacting in the industry, demanding precision that few can master. That Asian players, hereon, had a facility of this type was, in itself, a statement of how far TRT had brought the sector. The facility was open to all, even competitors. And through this, he showcased to the world, developing and developed, that his country was no longer just a bystander but was leading from the front.





Clinton Global Initiative Conference,
New York, 2008

Global attention had tracked TRT from early on. When Indian industry began to find its footing after liberalisation, he was among those defining what this could look like. As always, he refused to follow convention. **Rather than first consolidating in Asian markets, he took his technology directly to the United States, a move that confounded the standard logic of expansion. Suzlon’s US subsidiary was established in 2001, and two years later, the company was exporting turbines across the Atlantic.**

He also began building infrastructure to serve world-scale ambitions. He established a global supply chain with touchpoints in India, China, and the United States, enabling Suzlon to serve markets on every continent. By 2006-07, barely a decade after starting out, he had built a manufacturing capacity of 9,000 MW—among the highest globally at a time when India’s own cumulative installations stood at about 6 GW.

To be clear, this was not a blind pursuit of personal or national pride. There was a strategy at work. TRT could easily have focussed on expanding inside India, and in the surrounding regions. And yet he invested abroad, because he was determined to provide solutions at a global scale. As always, it was the larger horizon that held his gaze.

For example, in the mid-2000s only two companies manufactured WTG gearboxes anywhere in the world. This concentration was a hurdle — one that quietly constrained how fast the entire global wind energy sector could grow. TRT identified this as a bottleneck. At first, true to his spirit of localisation, he worked with a local company to develop indigenous technology. However, the results were unsatisfactory.

Next, he liaised with those foreign companies to raise supply. Here again, the pace was disappointing. So ultimately, when an opportunity arose to acquire one of those two manufacturers, he seized it. This acquisition of a foreign giant made international news, with critics sneering that it might be an overreach for an Indian entrepreneur.

But he chuckled and remarked, ‘When foreign companies take over firms in India, it is seen as normal. When an Indian buys one or two firms in Europe, that is seen as unusual.’

And in the end, his decision benefitted not just Suzlon but customers around the globe. He expanded operations, set up new plants in India and abroad, and grew the company several times over. Today, albeit under new ownership, the company in question still supplies a major share of gearboxes to the world.





With Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and Hon'ble Prime Minister of Spain Mariano Rajoy, India-Spain CEO Forum, Madrid, 2017

The acquisitions TRT made abroad were never purely outward looking. Each one was also an investment in what Suzlon could become – and in what India's engineering capabilities could ultimately achieve. His purchase of a leading German wind energy giant, in a deal noted around the world, expanded Suzlon's global footprint. It also provided Suzlon with access to high-capacity turbine technology, in the 5 MW and 6 MW segments, strengthening its foothold in developed markets like Europe and North America.

Alongside these international acquisitions in manufacturing, TRT invested in reputed companies in the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark for R&D, too. After all, he would never compromise on technology. The German acquisition, for instance, was purchased partly to expand the global wind energy market, but equally for knowledge exchange.

The results were sturdy: in India, he was able to eliminate certain technical challenges altogether, while the German arm, under his guidance, saw its turnover rise by fifty-two per cent. Furthermore, the acquisition positioned Suzlon as a key player in the offshore wind sector. Despite certain challenges that followed, the whole episode represented a bold move, demonstrating to the world both his ambition and his unwillingness to be taken as anything less than a sincere global leader in the sector.





TRT's conviction that the future belonged to those who built for it – rather than those who waited for it – expressed itself most tangibly in how he approached research and development. As he was learning from the European market, TRT knew that his mission of making affordable renewable energy hinged on two things: global talent and value engineering. He went to Germany to build a global centre for research and innovation, to develop design and technology. Here, he also gained international certifications for the turbines.

The Netherlands gave him specialists in blade design and integration. He could now develop blades in-house for specific turbine models. In Denmark, he found experts who could help him design hardware systems for real-time monitoring, i.e. SCADA.

When it was time to employ all this knowledge for product development, there was no second thought about India being the hub for value engineering. He could work with some of the world's best engineers in India, while keeping the end product affordable for customers. But this plan couldn't be executed without addressing the elephant in the room – professionals in India had no prior

experience in turbine design. TRT was determined to build these capabilities. So, he instructed his team to hire designers, structural engineers, load analysts, and software engineers. People enthused by the opportunity to do something entirely new, who were self-starters motivated to do their best. Focused on business continuity, TRT also brought operations & maintenance to foreground, which roped in repeat orders. The insights from on-field turbines went back into R&D. Today, Suzlon houses the largest service fleet in the world—and thirty years later, India is adept at designing roughly seventy-five per cent of a turbine locally. And Suzlon is the only wind energy company in the country with fully in-house R&D and the capability to design and develop wind turbines from scratch.

It was precisely his awareness of the importance of R&D that saw him pump in investments under this head even during a phase of financial uncertainty in the 2010s. Indeed, when a colleague saw him discuss green hydrogen, green nitrogen, and other futuristic ideas once, he wondered how the Windman could devote attention to these topics while facing a crisis. TRT smiled,

‘Remember,’ he said, ‘we are in the technology business and must always be ahead of the curve.’ It was the same mindset that had guided him all the way from the 1980s.



Futuristic ideas





With M Kannappan

TRT also stayed committed to building renewable energy infrastructure on the ground. His aim was to establish a hub for wind energy production. It was with this in mind that he developed Special Economic Zones (SEZs), a successor of the textile manufacturing estates he had set up years before in Surat. The logic was the same: bring the entire ecosystem together in one place, eliminate friction, and let the collective capability exceed what any single player could achieve alone. After all, producing a wind turbine required a variety of components, supplied by diverse manufacturers.

To streamline this and maximise efficiency, he brought on board bankers, manufacturers, and investors in his SEZs. To attract the top vendors and talent, he developed these end-to-end manufacturing zones into world-class business hubs, distinct from the towns and villages they were located in. In 2008, for instance, a ₹4000 crore SEZ was announced in Tamil Nadu.

It was a tremendous task: as with the wind parks, land had to be acquired, government permissions obtained, regulatory requirements met, and so on. Similar SEZs were set up in Gujarat and Karnataka, creating sophisticated assembly lines for wind turbines, while attracting ancillary businesses.

They also became homes to research centres, and generated jobs for thousands of rural people. TRT advocated that everything at Suzlon was built around ‘five capitals.’ Projects had to contribute to a place’s natural capital, its social capital,

physical capital, financial capital, and ultimately, its human capital.

But amidst many triumphs, there were also headwinds. A cynic might argue that it is easy to shine on the ascendant; what happens, however, when a rough wind throws plans off course? Here again, TRT left a fine example. In the late 2000s, there were issues with blades on a new turbine model in the US, for example. The press took unkind notice. In factual terms, such snags occurred occasionally in the products of all companies; TRT could have cited many an example. But he never took recourse to this line of justification.

Instead, he retrofitted blades on the entire fleet around the world. To him, arguing that defects were sometimes inevitable risked damaging customer faith in the wind infrastructure as a whole, something he’d never allow. And as far as the international market was concerned, the determination and alacrity with which he replaced the blades ensured no one could ever argue that his company had been found wanting.

Here again was the mark of a leader: he chose always to do the right thing.





CSR, to him, was not charity but a part of a leader's belief.

Even as he battled financial concerns, TRT ensured his ventures continued to deliver, both as a business, and as a maker of great value and impact. If in 2015 India had 13 GW of wind installations, as much as forty per cent of this was thanks to his efforts. In 2011, while some in the press thought his tale had stuttered to an end, Suzlon was ranked by the World Economic Forum as one of sixteen sustainability champions out of 1000 global brands.

If by 2015 wind energy accounted for seventy per cent of India's total clean energy capacity, here again it was impossible to speak without reference to TRT. Indeed, he refused to cut off even CSR funds during his crisis years. In 2012, in fact, his initiatives

received the second Asia's Best CSR Practices Award, despite competitors from forty countries. During a progress update on the Zero Cataract Program, one of Suzlon Foundation's flagship initiatives, he was told the year's target was set at 200 surgeries, given limited funds. 'Don't focus on the funds,' he said.

'Focus on what you want to achieve, and the resources will follow.'

It was a simple yet powerful philosophy and left a lasting impression on his team. They shifted their mindset, no longer constrained by the ledger but anchored instead to what mattered. And just as he had promised, the resources flowed in from partners, friends, and even customers.



Leader's belief



*Suzlon Wind Farm,
Bhuj*

By the time TRT passed away in 2022, he had created impact on a scale that is impossible to quantify. He cradled the entire renewables energy sector in India, wind and beyond. He had mentored many a bright mind, some of them today leading their own companies. He also won admiration from the international community, both for himself and his country. And his role as a climate champion has already entered the pages of history.

*Today, as wind turbines
turn around the world,
each rotation carries with
it a piece of his legacy.*

Barely in his sixties when he took his leave, one cannot but wonder how much more he had to offer. After all, the turbines he pioneered with Suzlon stand on coastlines and hilltops from Tamil Nadu to Texas, from the Kutch desert to the plains of South Africa and Australia. Each one spins a story larger than itself, the story of a simple man who defied convention, turned adversity into advantage, and learned to lead in the clean-energy mission.

Yet, he himself would have urged us to focus less on him, and more on the fire that fuelled him. For ultimately, TRT's story is a story about the power of purpose. Not the small, scant vision of safe, incremental improvements. **It was a restless, unfearing, and decisive vision that marked TRT's life and work.**





*Suzlon Wind Farm,
Australia*

After all, he believed in wind energy and India before the world did. He pinned his faith to renewables before the markets did. This was a man who took responsibility for climate change before even official policies emerged. The future he envisioned, where clean energy powers prosperity, India leads rather than follows, and business and the environment exist in harmony, is still being realised. And while TRT is no more, the company he built continues to stand at the heart of it, still driven by his values; still committed to his belief that the best business is the business of building a better

world. As his legacy continues, it is led by those who learned and worked at his side. And the force that powers the turbines is the same that filled his sails of change, progress, and a hope for a cleaner, more sustainable future. It is the same force, in fact, that lives in every person who chooses to look beyond themselves and ask: what could this become, if I give it everything I have?

The wind, as he always knew, does not stop. And neither does what he started.



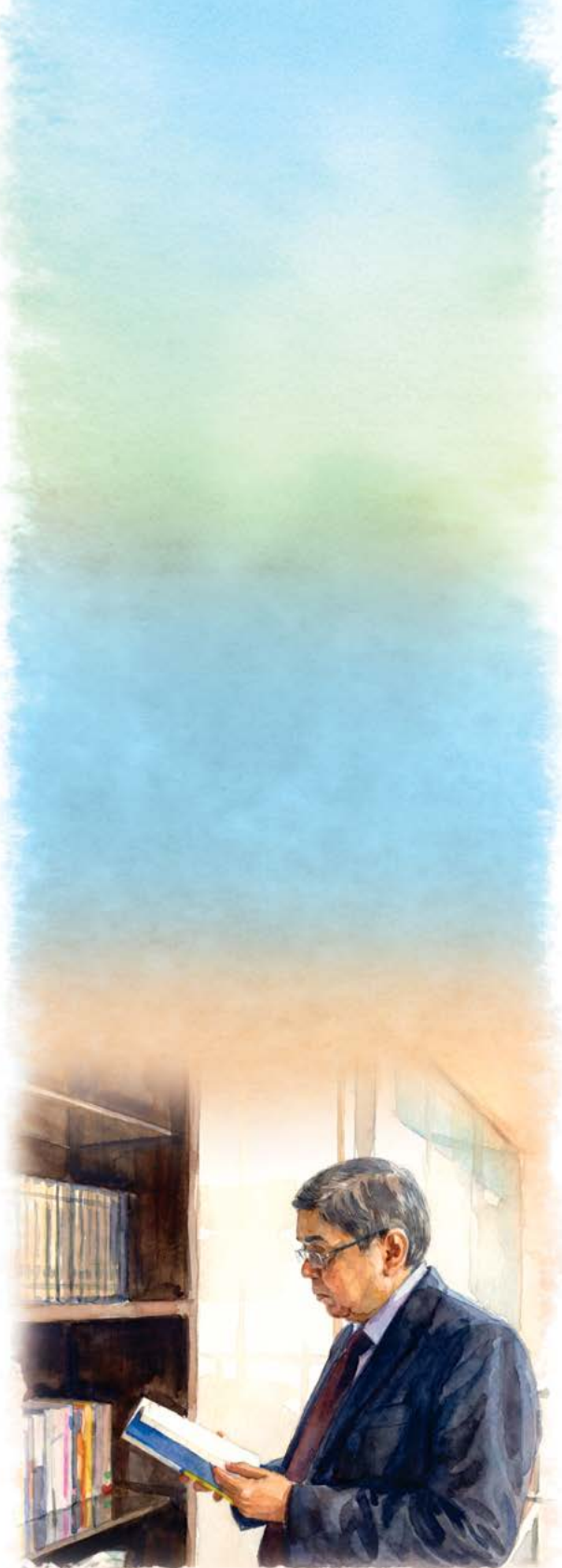


*Today, the
wind still
calls. And
Tulsi Tanti
still answers.*

Through every turbine he built and person he touched.







CHAPTER 3

THE LEGACY

The most exceptional kind, the type that endures long after its maker is gone, is estimated by what was made possible for others on a scale that transcends boundaries.

Some legacies are measured in what a person builds. Others are assessed on the basis of what they might have altered. The most exceptional kind, however, the type that endures long after its maker is gone, is estimated by what was made possible for others on a scale that transcends boundaries. And Tulsi Tanti's legacy sits firmly in this last, decidedly unique category. It is not a closed account, spoken of in the past tense. It is an ongoing phenomenon, an open invitation to those who have come after him, to keep building, to dream big and to always look ahead. To understand what he left behind, one must first acknowledge what he believed in.

Not his business philosophy in a limited sense, but his deeper convictions about the nature of growth itself. What is it for? Who does it belong to? And what are the obligations growth places on those who pursue it? These were not abstract positions or mere musings of a philosophical nature. They were his active, working principles, applied daily, and tested in every decision. Refined over a lifetime, their constant championing might have broken a lesser resolve. One might even say that this was the flame that burnished TRT's every achievement.





With Shri Sharad Pawar,
Vankusawade Wind Park, Satara, 1999

At its heart lay a disarmingly simple question: is this good for all? Not for the company alone, or for this quarter, or that deal, or this particular stakeholder. *Good for all*; from the vendor to the customer, from the employee to the community, from industries to nations, from people to the planet. And from the present generation to each one that will follow. It was a question that expanded everything while stifling nothing. It ruled out shortcuts even as it prompted new, ever more remarkable possibilities. Simply put, it was never just brain and heft; it was also heart and soul.

This was the lens through which he thought of business, and by which he would transform it.

True growth, in his view, was never extractive, nor could it allow exclusion. A company that rose while weakening others would have done little more than redistribute imperfection. A sector that expanded by concentrating advantage in a few hands was merely lining up its own limits.

Real growth was that which replenished, which left the ecosystem stronger and more resilient than it was originally. Development, too, in his mind, meant nothing if it was pooled up in one or two places. That would only birth imbalance. Instead, it had to radiate outwards, nourishing and empowering everything along the way.

To be clear, this was not an excess of idealism or sentimentality at work. It was, for TRT, an eternal mantra for creating something durable, intangible, and all-encompassing. Something embodied in a word he often highlighted: ‘value.’



Inclusive growth





For too many, ‘sustainability’ is something of a technical term or a mere compliance obligation.

For TRT, however, sustainability was a moral compass, the instrument around which he oriented every move, small and big.

Renewable energy was, in this sense, more than a mere source of power, it was also an expression of his deepest values. Here was a technology that created energy without depletion and delivered power without damage. It was a means of prosperity that ensured future generations would not have to pay that all-incinerating price of environmental destruction. For him, this alignment between business and principle was anything but coincidental. He actively sought it out and committed to it. That he did so at a time when neither market nor policy environment valued even the principle, makes his story only more extraordinary.

It is what cements his place as a true visionary extraordinaire.

*Expression of
his deepest
values*





Site Visit for Padubidri Plant,
2008

Remarkably, he was able to win over the world at large to this cause. It began with an almost visceral understanding of cause and consequence. He recognised, earlier than almost any of his contemporaries, that the choices made in a boardroom today would determine the shape of the world decades hence. It was not an observation he reached through academic study; it was something he felt with genuine urgency from his own experience. Sustainability was not a fashionable corporate posture or a strategic positioning. It was a personal mission.

He understood that the twin forces of economic growth and environmental stewardship were allies to be cultivated together, rather than adversaries to be balanced. His great insight, and his lasting gift, was proving this at scale, repeatedly and across whole decades.

His view of sustainability extended beyond energy. It shaped the way he thought about trust, relationships, and the invisible architecture of any enterprise really worth building.

He recognised that trust, once broken in service of a short-term uptick, could not simply be reclaimed. That the gain was always smaller than it appeared, and the cost, ultimately, steep. So, when fairness required him to eschew short-term interests, to correct an external oversight that unduly favoured him, to honour a commitment that had become difficult, or to forego a margin to preserve a relationship, he invariably chose the *right* path, never the easy path. Sustainable relationships in fact, became his competitive advantage; by investing in these, he actually reinforced and fortified his business.

The same logic governed the hardest decisions he had to take, involving people's livelihoods, their dignity, and their ability to provide for those who depended on them. These weighed on him as moral and even personal problems, not operational ones. The idea that a business decision could be separated from its human consequences was foreign to his thinking. Growth that required trampling on others to get ahead didn't even deserve that term, in his opinion. Why, to TRT, it was not growth at all but a hollow transfer, a re-labelling of someone else's loss as one's own gain. So, when he built organisations, they were places where advancement was genuinely collective; where the rise of the enterprise was also, in concrete terms, the rise of the *people* within and around it.



People, Planet & Purpose

He often spoke of two 'Ps' as the basis of everything he did. Most are familiar with the usual 'Ps' of business: profit, productivity, performance, and so on. But for him, everything started with one rarely mentioned 'P': People. Not as a resource, not as a line item in a cost structure, but as the *point* of everything. Without people, he would say, there was no worthwhile future. And precisely because this first 'P' was supreme, the other, the Planet, too, was critical. After all, if one genuinely cared about human beings, could one be indifferent to the world they inhabited, the air they breathed, or the climate their children would inherit? The two were umbilically linked. Care for people *necessitated* care for the planet. And care for the planet in turn was ultimately an expression of commitment to humanity as a whole.

But there was a third, unstated 'P' that bridged the other two, exemplified in his very being: Purpose. TRT did not build to accumulate. He built

to contribute. His sense of intention was visible in every choice he made: in choosing untested wind energy over success in textiles; in developing indigenous technology when importing would have been far more convenient; in nurturing even rivals when protecting his own position would have been easier. It was this higher sense that made him truly great. Equally, purpose gave him an inner fortitude to absorb setbacks without bitterness, reject shortcuts without hesitation, and always ask, even amidst a crisis, what a decision meant not just for today, but for the future as well.

Ultimately, this logic lay at the root of everything he built. In fact, his conviction in this regard constitutes the essence of his legacy. Whether as a problem-solver and entrepreneur, or a leader determined to resolve tomorrow's troubles, in the end, it was all for his treasured 'Ps' of people and planet, powered by purpose.





WORLD
ECONOMIC
FORUM

Most who knew TRT well often repeat a word when they speak of him: ‘foundations.’ By this they refer to something greater than the creation of Suzlon or the wind energy sector and associated policy frames of national relevance. Yes, he built all of these, but when they mention that word, it is in a larger context.

It is to speak of foundations in a more fundamental sense. That is, he raised up an infrastructure, a stout, unshakeable scaffolding –that not only let him create, but would enable successive generations to also build. Indeed, while there are many who run good businesses and generate value for involved parties, a builder of foundations creates conditions that empower and catalyse new enterprises not yet conceived. They stimulate solutions yet even to be imagined.

It is somewhat like planting a tree. One does it not merely to enjoy the view, but in the hope that it will offer shade to countless others in the ages ahead.

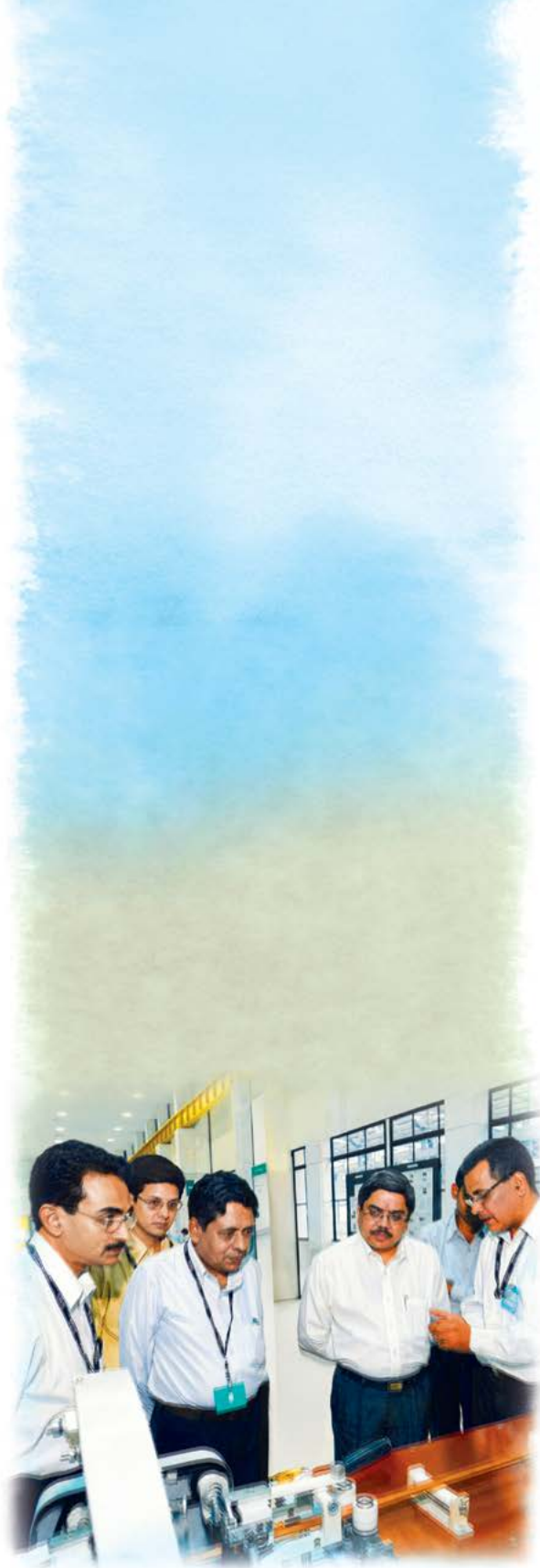
TRT always understood this distinction and chose, consciously and consistently, the harder path; he would be the gardener who let others enjoy the fruits of his labour. He invested in supply chains because he recognised the sector would require them down the line to bloom, rather than because Suzlon needed them in that moment.

He cultivated policy understanding because he knew a stable policy environment would render more viable every future deal, for every stakeholder, and not because it served a deal he was doing. He built institutions, expertise, and capabilities because he could see further than most; because he knew that the work being done right now was not the final destination, only the beginning of something grander.

Put simply, his gaze was always on the complete arc of potential, rather than immediate goals.

Arc of potential





For instance, when he established India's first wind parks, he wasn't just solving a power crisis; he was laying the ground for an entire industry to take birth. When he insisted on indigenous R&D and in-house manufacturing over faster, cheaper imports, he was building India's long-term technological credibility globally. When he entered international markets, bypassing the typical trend of local expansion, he was making a statement about where Indian enterprise belonged in the world. And when he flew bankers by helicopter to a wind park, or spent hours explaining sustainability to unsure business leaders, he was reengineering their imagination. He was always, in everything, playing a longer game than those around him.

And in the process, TRT was urging others also to think bigger and better.

After all, when your goal is to grow the size of the pie, not to carve out a selfish share, there is never a case for opposition.

The result was universal respect. Competitors regarded him with something close to reverence. After all, he was the largest, most-established player in his sector. A lesser man would have been tempted to deploy that position of strength to edge out or diminish rivals. Such a person might have sought narrow wins, consolidating his advantage while cornering competition. But Tulsi Tanti nurtured the ecosystem. Even those competing against him saw a man who believed that a healthy industry was in everyone's interest. To him, a rival's success was not a threat, but evidence of the sector's vitality, proof that the collective effort was working and delivering change for society at large. This is also why, in his storied career, he never made enemies, a remarkable feat, possible only for the most towering men, because his intentions were always sincere.



Capacious vision





A global force in renewable energy

The results speak in a register that transcends all of his individual achievements. Through his work, he sparked a new and lasting boost to India's economy. This was anything but the temporary stimulus of a solitary large enterprise; it was the structured expansion that comes from an entire sector being parented into existence.

In the process, supply chains were developed, a diverse manufacturing base built, and thousands of careers were created in disciplines and roles that had not previously existed. India today is the world's third-largest producer of wind energy, a position unimaginable when TRT founded Suzlon in 1995 with barely twenty employees. Every individual in the value chain; engineers, technicians, vendors, manufacturers, financiers, and policymakers, rose with the tide he helmed, reaching heights that had once seemed unimaginable.

TRT's global impact also stemmed from this. His was a quiet but commanding, consequential presence on the world's most significant stages. He was not merely present at these forums; he shaped their direction. His arguments for renewable energy carried the unusual authority of someone who had actually built the infrastructure at scale, in a developing country, against the odds; against a hundred naysayers at home and abroad. Political leaders, policymakers, and industry heads heard him, and were persuaded. Indeed, winning international accolades, he became more than just India's finest voice in the climate discourse; he was among the world's most consequential minds in the movement.

His pathbreaking early stance on climate change is perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of his story.





Site Visit for Padubidri Plant,
2008

Growth for all

His model of leadership itself, personified in every act, was about elevation. Ambition was joined with empathy, and scale balanced with fairness. ‘Growth for all’ was his philosophy, stated pithily but lived completely. It also placed a responsibility on those who inherited his mantle; they, too, today resist the easy path; they also envision a wider frame; and they, too, measure themselves by exacting standards.

It can seem daunting, but as he showed all his life, such leadership is possible, works, and leaves behind something exemplary. It requires each

of us to step up and think beyond conventional success. TRT cherished this approach because it was worthy. And given how he personified that rare combination of conviction and ability; he could demonstrate that it was also effective. That the good and the practical, in the long run, were in alignment rather than in tension.

For future generations of entrepreneurs, engineers, policymakers, and of anyone who will be called upon to make momentous decisions, his work is proof that sustainable growth, above all, is a mindset.

That leadership, at its best, lies in service.





The word ‘legacy’ can often give the impression of a closed chapter. But with TRT, the term can only be applied in an active sense.

Even in his passing, Suzlon continues his work stronger than ever, guided by his commitment to sustainability as a global mission. The statistics alone are remarkable: the company is India’s No. 1 wind energy producer with 21 GW of installations globally; it contributes 29 per cent to India’s wind capacity, powering one in every three wind turbines in the country; it is a maker of indigenously developed turbines, constituting over 90 per cent of its order book; it produces a model that has one of the lowest carbon footprints in the world. And as India plans to achieve 400 GW of wind installations by 2047, Suzlon stands at the heart of this journey, as its very engine.

But numbers alone do not tell the whole story. Today at TRT’s company, the values are intact. The ambitions are greater. The foundations he laid are secure. And the men and women he mentored, his siblings, his children, colleagues, the thousands of professionals whose careers he built and whose potential he unlocked continue to march forward. Or as one of his brothers put it, Suzlon’s work transcends the energy transition and any individual corporate aims. ‘We are here to accelerate the decarbonisation of the planet.’ One recognises in these words a successor team who has absorbed not merely the strategy but the essence of his message.





*HE READ
THE WIND*

AND THOSE WHO LOVED HIM
KNOW HOW TO MOVE WITH IT



Wedding Celebration,
Jaipur, 2022

It is in this light that his legacy, with its fullest meaning, continues through his family. Having been by his side for decades, it now looks clear that he was always preparing them for what was to come, not in the abstract, but in the most deliberate and nurturing sense. His brothers were partners in the enterprise from its earliest days, trusted with responsibility that grew in step with time. The Sunday meetings, the shared purpose, the culture of collective leadership, all of it was, in retrospect, an education in carrying things forward. TRT built a company, yes. But he also silently built a succession, a community of leaders who understood not just the wind energy business, but the values that define it.

So, at the end of the day, while the language may differ, the conviction remains the same. Under the stewardship of his brothers, and the broader leadership he cultivated, Suzlon continues to embody his vision.

*He lit on the torch, and all
who marched by his side,
hold it high, now
and forever.*





*For as the wind
endures, so too
does the spirit of
Tulsi Tanti and all
he represented.*

When all is said and done, what was Tulsi Tanti's legacy? That in every way, in each act, and in every living moment, he chose good. And in making that choice, over and over again, even when it was onerous, he scaled the very heights of greatness.

It is something no balance sheet can capture, and no biography can entirely explain. His is a living, breathing legacy. It is not a monument but a method. Above all, it is defined in the most literal and hopeful sense, by a foundation, rather than by an ending.

Today, therefore, the work continues, the ground holds, and the inner mantra he lived by, 'Is this good for all?' retains an immortal salience. And in what would have filled him with pride and joy, thousands have chosen to stand up, follow in his footsteps, and carry on ahead.

SUZLON

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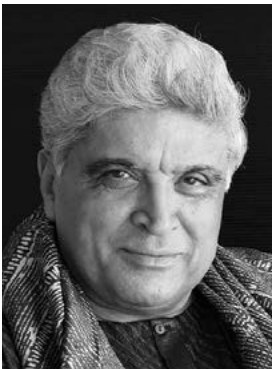
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About the Poet

Javed Akhtar is an Indian screenwriter, lyricist, poet, and political activist. Renowned for his extensive work in Hindi cinema, he has won five National Film Awards and sixteen Filmfare Awards. He was honoured with the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2007, two of India’s highest civilian honours.



About the Author

Dr. Manu S. Pillai is a historian and the author of five books, most recently ‘Gods, Guns & Missionaries: The Making of the Modern Hindu Identity’ (2024). A winner of the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar for his first book, ‘The Ivory Throne’, Manu holds a PhD in history from King’s College London.



About the Artist

Uday Bhan is an Indian contemporary artist known for his expressive paintings that explore themes of nature, human emotion, and the relationship between the inner self and the surrounding world.

Cover and Inside back page painted by Uday Bhan





There appear, every now and then in the world, individuals who defy easy categorisation. Tulsi Tanti was one such phenomenon.

His work is a milestone in the trajectory of the twenty-first-century world, particularly as we battle the epoch-defining challenge of climate change. He was, in fact, one of the first business figures globally to make the fight against this creeping disaster a cornerstone of his vision. When future histories are written of our time, his will be a name that merits a sincere mention. The book you hold is a tribute to this remarkable man.

Was he an entrepreneur? Yes, but alongside his business, he also fathered a whole sector. Was he a leader? Certainly, but he broke old, hackneyed moulds and cemented new standards for ethical leadership. Did he have a vision? He did, and in the broadest, most positive sense, in which he sought not merely the benefit of his own enterprise, but also mentored a legion of men and women who paid it forward. How about ambition? He definitely had no dearth of this, but it was oriented towards the benefit of the many, rather than the few. Were there struggles? Always, every day even, but he confronted them with a smile and a sense of humour.

Call of the Wind is only a small encapsulation of a very substantial life. It takes us behind the highly-regarded business leader, who was also a human being with his own distinct quirks, and whose leadership mantra was built on faith in one another. It's a memorial to his personal philosophy and the world he has left behind, better than he found it.

SUZLON

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