

## CHAPTER 1

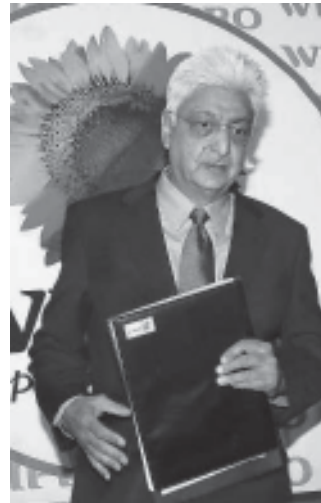
# India **No.1**

MEET the movers and shakers of the brave New India.

He dropped out of an undergrad course at Stanford to lead papa's oil business that was unimaginatively named Western India Vegetable Products. Today, under his stewardship this company has metamorphosed itself into WIPRO, has breached the \$2 billion mark in revenues and given the man himself a staggering personal worth of 11 billion dollars. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know whom that we are talking about the one and only Azim Premji.

He wasn't born with the proverbial silver spoon. His early life was a grind as the family tried to make the two ends meet. Yet by 1975, he had set up his first steel company at distant Jakarta. By 2006 he had gobbled up global steel major Arcelor. Today, his empire dots the world. By last count his total wealth placed him just behind Microsoft's Bill Gates and investment guru Warren Buffet in the Forbes' List of the world's richest. Shake hands with steel tycoon, Lakshmi Niwas Mittal.

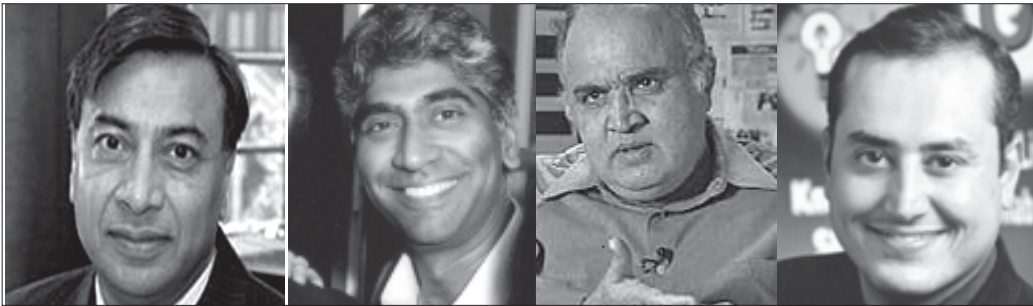
He is friends and on first name terms with Pierce Brosnan, Dustin Hoffman and Steven Spielberg. Moving to the US in 1975 to search his fortunes as a professional tennis player, destiny beckoned him to Hollywood. Today, 30 years and 80 films later Ashok Amritraj as Chairman and CEO of Hyde Park



Entertainment, runs one of the most trusted names in business.

You could easily mistake him for Vito Corleone of 'The Godfather' fame. But this is no film-like plot. Meet the real life Godfather to thousands of Indians aspiring to hit it big at the Silicon Valley. That's the venture capitalist, the IIT alumni Kanwal Rekhi. For sure, he is the Indian American face of wealth creation.

He was a drop out from BITS, Pilani. When he met myriad angel investors with a project whose revenue model hinged on eyeballs and eyeballs alone, they

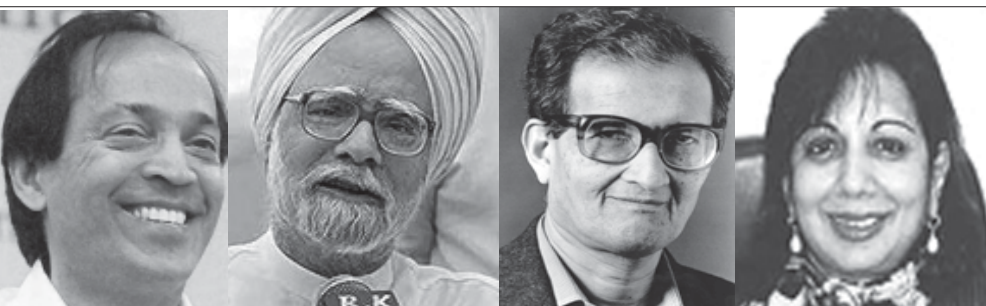


mocked at him. "Crazy Indian" they murmured. But he went ahead undaunted taking the magic of email to every corner of the globe. Three years later, at age 28, Bill Gates came knocking at his door. Microsoft coughed up an incredible \$400 million for Sabeer Bhatia's start-up. Today, Hotmail, boasts of 50 million subscribers – one quarter of all Internet users!

With the publication in 1993 of 'A Suitable Boy', Vikram Seth is considered a big presence in modern English fiction. Described by one critic as 'three and a half pounds of perfection', this magnum opus running to 1349 pages is one of the longest works of fiction in English since the 18th century. Believe it or not, Vikram Seth initially studied politics and economics!

He came out of retirement to script one of the greatest transformations that any country has ever attempted in world history. India's successful shift from a closed, protected, socialist form of economy to an open, market driven, capitalistic form of economy is a global case study. In 15 years flat a near bankrupt country has been so transformed that it now threatens to dominate the world in the years ahead. Meet the earnest, soft-spoken Sikh with a stomach for tough decisions, Dr. Manmohan Singh.

You may argue with him. You might even disagree with him. But you cannot ignore him. You cannot think of



India minus Dr. Amartya Sen. In 1998, his seminal work on the 'Poorest people in our society' won him the Nobel Prize for Economics.

## **Woman on the rise**

Ha, if you are wondering why there are no women on the list, you wondered too early. When Kiran Mazumdar Shaw kicked off business in the late seventies, there were scorns all around. No one was willing to work with her. Who wants to work for a woman, they asked. Bankers shied away from her proposals. Few in India had heard of biotechnology. But all that is history. Today Shaw represents the Indian face of woman innovation. In 2001, her venture was singled out at the 'World Economic Forum Tech

Pioneer'. In 2005, India crowned her with a Padma Bhushan.



She is India's top woman banker. A flamboyant walk up the corporate ladder means she is within striking distance of cracking the glass ceiling at the HSBC bank. Now its Vice President she could one day become its Chair Person. That would make her the first woman to do so. Meet Naina Lal Kidwai, named by fortune international as one of the 50 most powerful business women outside the United States.

Well, what do all these men and women have in common? All of them are globally successful Indians who began simple. And mark it; this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Folks, count your stars. You've arrived at a time when Indians are beating others hollow in all fields. Generation Now, as we would like to call you, wields a power that's far more than what its parents enjoyed. With time and energy by your side, zip up with zest. You can beat your competitors and walk into this hallowed list.