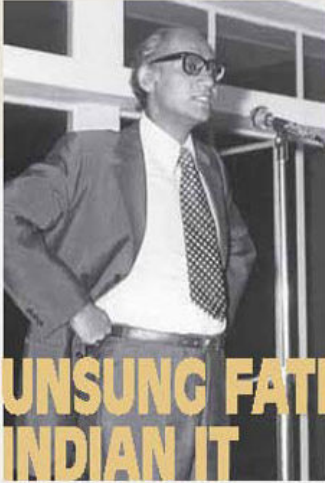


**Obit** Dr. P.P. Gupta, founder, CMC Limited



## UNSUNG FATHER OF INDIAN IT

When I was writing the article on Myth of Leadership Development for the last issue of ManagementNext, one name that was lurking at the back of my mind was that of Dr P. P. Gupta, the founder of CMC Limited. 'PPG', as he was fondly called, is an undisputed architect of the Indian IT landscape. He passed away on July 5, 2009.

In my two stints with CMC between mid eighties and nineties, I have had the privilege of being an attaché to Dr. P. P. Gupta, during his visits to our office. This gave me the opportunity to pick up an occasional chat with him and get to know his fascinating perspectives.

The aspect of PPG that I choose to bring out here has something to do with his aliveness – his life-giving forces, some of the values that he nurtured and cherished, his sense of calling and the sheer intent with which he would fiercely drive his dream to fruition.

PPG's unique contribution to India's information technology landscape, including enhancing the quality-of-life of its people, through pioneering applications is often taken for granted today. From computer literacy in schools (CLASS), to setting up the first country-wide network (INDONET), to sparing the country from the bane and pain of getting a reservation on trains, by computerizing the passenger reservation system (IMPRESS), to participating in India's defense initiative to enable the launch of its first missile, AGNI – PPG made sure his dreams, no matter how indomitable they appeared, were realized. We saw and used the first email in the country. Outsourced data processing and hosted applications were already there, earning revenue for CMC. And acquisition of Baton Rouge International Inc, USA brought in off shoring revenue in, as early as, 1991. All these were the ideas of a die hard explorative adventurer - someone for whom adventure was a way of life, a value to be cherished.

More than being a visionary, dreamer, achiever, PPG was a great human being. I was awed by the sense of abundance which came associated with unmistakable respect that PPG had for us, as individuals. A certain sense of freedom and pride

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always prevailed amongst us, the CMCites. It was something about the organization climate – the quality of working ambience one would have in the office, the quality of travel and stay we were entitled to and even the quality of inter-personal interactions and engagements that were experienced at the workplace – it all made every employee feel special. And none of this happened because of any policy. It was there because of PPG's infectious belief in and commitment to the well-being of the CMC family.

Open office – something that many companies brag of today – was a matter of fact reality for us, in the way we were seated in an open space, even in the meeting spaces that were aesthetically created in the open air.

CMC Annual days were a must attend for PPG. And he would make sure that not only the employees but their families were also there. What fascinated me was his ability to remember names and other details of not only most employees (even when CMC was 3000 strong across the country) but even their family members.

A believer of human talent and a relentless task master, he made sure that mediocrity had no place in the vicinity of CMC and never waited to recognize and appreciate talent.

I remember having heard him say that as human beings we are all wired to bring our best to the work place, provided we are given the right ambience. And he made sure we all had it irrespective of the levels or hierarchy. No wonder the HR policies we had then are still some of the most enabling policies worth emulating.

The CMD who led CMC to fame and fortune, started out from one room in Mumbai's Air India Building with just one employee – his driver Rajan. A rare institution builder and a business and industry leader class apart, PPG unknown to himself and others, without any design or motive, has touched many a lives as a role model. I am sure those who have crossed his path, would agree with me that, like me, in many ways he has left a lasting impact on our professional and personal journeys.

*Acknowledgement: My ex-colleagues Rekha Misra & Gayathri Krishnamurthy in CMC for sharing some of their perspectives about and experiences with Dr.P.P.Gupta.*

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