



MEN OF METTLE

The captains of Bengal's industry have also led the process of evolution of the land's socio-cultural ethos. Artist Suvapasanna frames the tycoons with the Midas touch

Industry

Art is not for art's sake, my hues and forms play a social role. For, I do not paint with a blindfolded conscience. Similarly an industrial house should not be concerned only with profit and loss figures. Agreed, it has a commitment to its shareholders, but they are part of a larger society. So, the larger the turnover figures of an industrial house, the bigger its responsibility to plough back towards social and cultural growth. This has guided my selection.

However, it cannot be the decisive factor in ranking the top 10 industries of Bengal. What is more, even in its so-called run down state, a lot many have made Bengal the cultural giant it is. Unfortunately there are no estimates of the business sizes of many of these houses.

Perforce then I make fleeting mention of names like the Ananda Bazar Patrika, which have cham-

pioned talents not only in Bengal literature but Indo-Anglian writing too, through Penguin India. Of PC Chandra, not for Dendrite but for upholding the tradition of fine jewellery, a hallmark of Bengal down decades. Of Ravi Poddar whose father Anandilal Poddar was highly respected as Kolkata's mayor. Of Arambagh Hatcheries, which was the only success story cited by McKinsey in 1966. Of the 'Paharpur' Swarups, the biggest manufacturers of cooling towers in the country, annually exceeding a turnover of Rs 600 crore. Of Umang Kejriwal, whose Electrosteel Castings leads the nation's producers of iron pipes. Of the Rs 800-crore 'Shrachi' Todis, big in housing, and manufacture of power tillers, whose Bengal link dates back to pre-partition Dhaka. Of Sree Leathers and Khadims, who have spread branches outside the state.

1. The Birlas, in my view, have been, and will remain, the first name of industrial Bengal. For B K Birla, who heads the clan whose various members are still perceived as one group, resides in Bengal. The combined turnover of various Birla companies — including Grasim and Hindalco, which don't have any operations in Bengal — crosses Rs 60,000 crore per annum. But it counts more for me that the Birlas have given the city its Planetarium, its technology museum, its academy of art, schools and colleges that continue to offer quality education to generations, and a temple with the finest auditorium in the city.
2. R P Goenka's links with Bengal go back two centuries, when Sir Hari Ram Goenka started his business. Today member firms of RPG Enterprises do combined

business of over Rs 8,000 crore per annum. Again, many of the firms like Ceat don't have operations in Bengal. But for the average Bengali they stand for CESC, Saregama and Music World. CESC solved the acute power shortage that once dogged the city; the recording company is still a Goliath in the music world.

3. The Bangurs enjoy a turnover of Rs 8,000 crore through manufacturing electrodes (Graphite India), cement (Shree Cement), paper (Andhra Paper, East Coast Paper), cables (Fort Gloster). Their contribution is in health infrastructure: they set up the Neuroscience Centre, besides SSKM and the Bangur Hospital.
4. SK Roy, son of B K Roy, the founder of Peerless General Finance and Investment Company Ltd, is

WATCH OUT FOR

Santanu Ghosh and Tathagata Dutta: have emerged as names that promise growth. With Chinese collaboration, they have brought PCs within the range of a common man. This has made Xenitis one of the fastest growing enterprises in the state.

among the wealthiest in Bengal (about 5,000 crore). And this wealth has come from non-banking finances and hospitals, hotels and real estate areas which were not earlier considered money-making enterprises.

5. B M Khaitan His group companies, which include McLeod Russel and Eveready, have a combined turnover of over Rs 2,000 crore per annum. An embodiment of British aristocracy and culture, they ushered in the concept of shopping malls with 22 Camac Street.
6. Jit Paul, though retired, remains the main driver of Apeejay Surrendra group, whose interests range from tea to hotels to shipping. Most of their firms are not listed on stock exchanges, still their combined turnover is assumed to be more than Rs 2,000 crore per annum. Starting out from here, Swaraj Paul became an international figure. Others in the family are enlightened promoters of art. Above all, the Pauls are the life of Park Street — a culture in itself as far as Bengal is concerned.
7. B K Jhawar of Usha Martin group, with businesses in Singapore and the US, are Bengal's giants in wire rods and steel. With an annual turnover in the range of Rs 2,500 crore, they ushered the mobile culture in the city with Command, which gave way to Hutch.
8. Harshvardhan Neotia, again, cannot be ranked through figures of Bengal Ambuja alone, which is estimated to be about Rs 1,500-2,000 crore per annum. His real 'value' is in revolutionising the city's concept of quality life. He gave the city apartments with health club, swimming pool, banking facilities and brought in art objects like Balkrishna Doshi and Charles Correa.
9. Ashish Jhunjhunwala's Group does business of over Rs 1,200 crore per annum. More importantly they manufacture steel bars. The Tatas were never in Bengal, and though L N Mittal has become the 'Man of Steel', he hasn't invested in his hometown.
10. RS Agarwal and RS Goenka of Emami Group, with a business of over Rs 1,000 crore every year, have made their cosmetics a household name across India.