



IIMC CASE RESEARCH CENTER (IIMCCRC)

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SHANTHA BIOTECH: A QUEST FOR AFFORDABLE VACCINATION

INTRODUCTION

It was a pleasant cloudless night. As he gazed into the starry night, he thought his company Shantha Biotech was shining brightly like the stars in the sky above. Just months ago, Shanta Biotech had completed its Silver Jubilee and he was enjoying his semi-retired life. He and his company were often heralded as the biotechnology pioneers of India. Kallam Anji Reddy, a doyen of Indian pharmaceuticals and founder of Dr. Reddys Labs, had often told him, "It's sheer luck that made you succeed in an otherwise completely risky endeavour," and equally often Varaprasad had agreed to thatⁱ attributing it to an "unknown force"ⁱⁱ. When he had started in 1993, it had seemed like madness, "an impossible task", "making a recombinant vaccine in India". Like others he too had attributed Shantha's success to the "unknown force" some would call God.

But, this evening, as he gazed into the night from his balcony, snatches of conversations he had had earlier in the day with a researcher flashed through his mind. This researcher had asked him about his journey. What made him try, to do it? His story had been recounted several times in media, yet, she had wanted to know if there was a method to doing cutting

Nimruji Jammulamadaka of the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta developed this case study as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate the effective or ineffective running of an organization.

edge and affordable innovation. As he replayed the conversation in his mind, Koduru Ishwara Varaprasad Reddy wondered if after all, there had been a method to his madness. Would he be able to do it if he had to do it all over again now? Had his deep commitment to the value and idea made all the difference? He had been awarded the third highest civilian honour of the country, Padma Bhushan for making recombinant vaccines affordable, but what indeed was his legacy? An affordable vaccine, a company, an industrial sector or a method? His mind quickly darted back to where it all began.

ⁱ Reddy (2015)

ⁱⁱ Daar & Singer (2011), pg. 172.