

Samir A. Desai: A Journey of Resilience, Philanthropy, and Global Impact



Samir Desai and Nilima With President Clinton

In the rich tapestry of success stories that define the Indian diaspora, the life of Samir A. Desai emerges as an inspiring beacon, illuminating the path from a humble village in Gujarat to global entrepreneurship, philanthropy, and community development. Born and raised in the small village of Untai, Desai's life journey has been marked by challenges, triumphs, and an unwavering commitment to giving back.

EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATION

Samir A. Desai's roots trace back to a modest family in Untai, a village that lacked basic amenities such as electricity, running water, or paved roads. Despite the challenges, his upbringing laid the foundation for qualities that would define his future—a philanthropic nature, resourcefulness, and an innate trust in people.

Completing primary education, Desai faced a significant obstacle as there was no high school in his village. In a remarkable display of community collaboration, his grandparents, who played a pivotal role in raising him, utilized local resources to build a high school. This early experience instilled in Desai the values of cooperation, networking, and the transformative impact of community-driven initiatives.

After high school, Desai pursued a degree in engineering at M.S. University in Vadodara. However, life took an unexpected turn when his father passed away, placing the responsibility of shouldering family burdens squarely on his shoulders. This early adversity became a crucible that shaped Desai's approach to prob-

lem-solving and resilience.

VENTURING ABROAD

Despite the challenges, Desai's educational journey continued. He secured admission to the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in the United States, a move that marked the beginning of a transformative phase in his life. Immersed in a diverse cultural milieu at IIT, Desai developed a passion for history, explored various cultures, and forged connections with people from all walks of life.

Upon graduation, Desai faced difficulties in securing a manufacturing job, leading him to pivot towards software and IT. This shift marked the beginning of a career characterized by adaptability, perseverance, and a willingness to venture into unknown territories.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUCCESS

In 1985, drawing on his entrepreneurial spirit, Desai founded Systems Resources Company, a high-tech system engineering and integration firm. Guided by hard work and dedication, he transformed the start-up into a thriving business. By 1999, recognizing the right moment, Desai made the strategic decision to sell Systems Resources Corporation to a publicly traded company based in San Diego.

Parallel to his professional journey, Desai and his wife, Nilima, were deeply involved in community development. They contributed to various organizations, including Gurjar, Peabody Essex Museum, Shishu Bharti, and Middlesex Community College. Desai's engagement in politics, such as accompanying President Clinton to Gujarat in 2001, underscored his commitment to societal well-being beyond business.

PHILANTHROPY AND LEGACY BUILDING

Samir Desai's impact extends far beyond the boardroom. In 1997, he played a crucial role in the establishment of two organizations that embody his commitment to community development and entrepreneurship. The first, The Indus Entrepreneur (TIE), is a global network fostering entrepreneurship. Today, TIE boasts chapters worldwide, making it the largest entrepreneurship network globally.

The second organization, The Desai Foundation, stands as a testament to Desai's dedication to health, livelihood, and menstrual equity programs for women and children in rural Indian communities. Rooted in the belief that community development and opportunities can transform lives, the foundation has expanded to work in 8 states, impacting over 7 million lives. The foundation's programs, including the Bal Health Mela and livelihood initiatives, exemplify a philosophy of listening to communities, problem-solving, and building sustainable solutions.

ASANI SANITARY NAPKIN PROGRAM

A flagship initiative of The Desai Foundation is the Asani Sanitary Napkin program. Designed to address menstrual health and equity issues, this program produces high-quality sanitary pads locally, providing employment opportunities for women. Beyond production, the program includes education on menstrual hygiene, reaching those who still use cloth rags and lack information on proper health care.

RECOGNITION AND CONTINUED IMPACT

The Desai Foundation's impactful pro-

grams have garnered recognition from influential figures, including Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who visited the program. In 2023, the foundation received the prestigious Indian CSR Awards – Top 20 Most Trusted NGOs in India.

Desai's approach to philanthropy mirrors his entrepreneurial spirit. The foundation actively listens to the communities it serves, employing problem-solving to build impactful and sustainable solutions. Whether it's the Bal Health Mela impacting hundreds of children at a time or livelihood programs teaching skills and entrepreneurship, The Desai Foundation exemplifies a commitment to cultivating dignity and transforming trajectories.

LEGACY CONTINUATION

Today, Samir A. Desai's daughter, Megha S. Desai, leads The Desai Foundation, carrying forward the legacy of giving back.

Samir's journey from a small village in Gujarat to establishing a high-tech company in the U.S., meeting three U.S. Presidents, and traveling to 55 countries, is a testament to the unpredictable yet rewarding nature of one's life path.

In recognition of his exceptional contributions, Samir A. Desai has received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2014, further affirming his status as a friend, advisor, and philanthropist. Today, he resides in Boston with his wife, Nilima, surrounded by his two daughters, Moha and Megha, and his two grandchildren, Vikram and Devraj.

Reflecting on his journey, Samir Desai imparts a valuable perspective: "One's path is not always a clear straight line, but rather one of hard work, curiosity, and passion. You never know where it will lead you. And that community can help you build and dream beyond your circumstances."

Samir A. Desai's life story is a narrative of resilience, curiosity, and passion that is woven with hard work, collaboration, and a deep commitment to making a positive difference in the world.



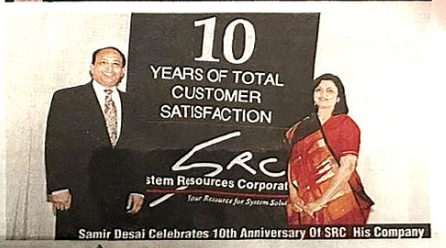
Desai Host Sec. John Kerry At Their Home



Samir And Family Visit Ancestral Temple in UNTAI, Gujarat



Samir Desai Visits Desai Foundation Asani Center in Lucknow



Samir Desai Celebrates 10th Anniversary Of SRC His Company

