



BLUE STAR

THE ORIGIN STORY OF BLUE STAR



ONE MAN'S VISION: COOLING THE THREE THINGS THAT LIFE DEPENDS ON - AIR, FOOD, AND WATER.

In the 1930s a young man once went to a friend's house in the scorching summer. His friend's mother handed him a glass of tepid water. The reason? She had boiled the water earlier to make it safe for drinking. Having no refrigerator, the family was accustomed to drinking tepid water. The young man drank the water, his thirst greater than the lack of satisfaction in drinking it.



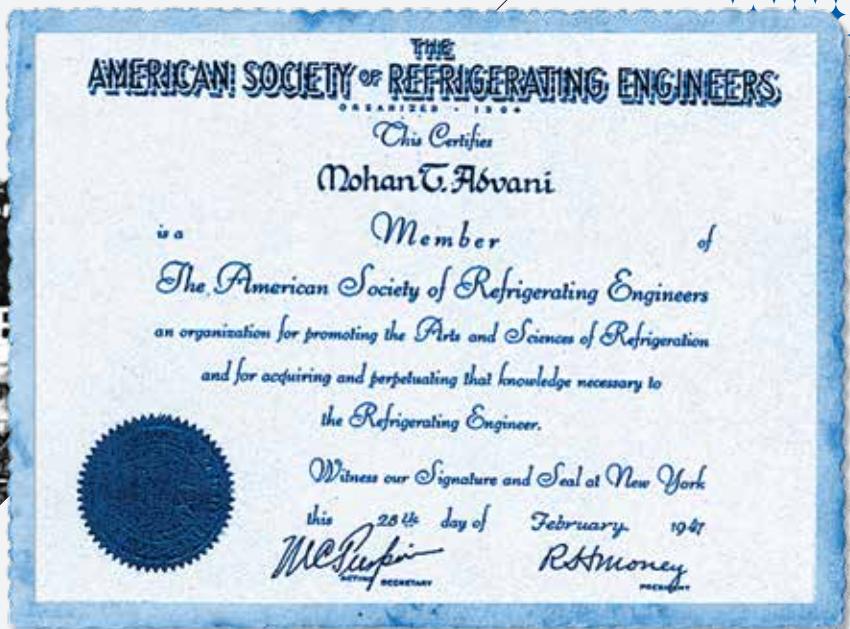
After enduring the heat that India experienced in the 1930s, this moment was a tipping point for him. It aroused Mohan's entrepreneurial spirit in a way which would not rest till it was quenched. He knew in his bones that this hot, tropical country needed dependable cooling solutions, and this thought seized him.

While his father pushed him to prepare for the Indian Civil Service, young Mohan dreamed of something different. And to pursue it, he joined Bombay Garage, distributors for the famed American Frigidaire refrigerator. In a way, the stars actually aligned for him. The day he joined, Mohan reaffirmed his belief that cooling was the future for a tropical country like India. He was passionate and asked a lot of questions. One evening, his boss expressed how impressed he was with Mohan's enthusiasm and zeal.



He told him that very seldom did he come across youngsters so passionate about a field like air conditioning and refrigeration, and asked Mohan what drove him. Mohan replied that he had a vision: to cool the three things that life depends on – air, food, and water – and make cooling easily accessible to the country at large.

This response prompted the senior leadership of Bombay Garage to send him to the Frigidaire factory in England for a year of comprehensive training on air conditioning and refrigeration fundamentals. And that was the beginning of a legacy.



Mohan soon equipped himself with knowledge of refrigeration and air conditioning. After he came back, World War II broke out and soon reached its peak. Imports were banned. It was a dull period at Bombay Garage as they were dependent on imports from Frigidaire. Mohan felt a deep need to start an enterprise that could provide people in the country with much-needed respite from heat in its many forms. He began repairing old cooling appliances which owners had acquired. The privations and shortages endemic in a war necessitated keeping all cooling equipment running.

AN UNSTOPPABLE IDEA

In 1943, the time had come for Mohan T Advani, or MTA as he was fondly called, to start his own company. The whole world would have called him crazy for thinking of starting a business at the peak of the Second World War, but history emphatically says he was anything but. He was an incurable optimist who saw mere shadows where others feared phantoms. As Victor Hugo said, "No force on earth can stop an idea whose time has come", and MTA went on to follow his dream. Not even a World War could stop the birth of Blue Star. The decision was not easy. He had two children and another one on the way.



MR. ADVANI.

WE ALL MEET HERE TODAY ON AN OCCASION, MINGLED WITH JOY AS WELL AS SORROW, BECAUSE WE ALL HAVE TO BID FAREWELL TO YOU. JOY - BECAUSE YOU ARE LEAVING US AND GETTING INTO A NEW LIFE OF COMMERCIAL VENTURE. WE, THEREFORE, EXPRESS OUR SENTIMENTS AND WISH YOU A COLLOSOAL SUCCESS IN YOUR NEW UNDERTAKING AND PRAY ALMIGHTY THAT YOU GET THE FULL RETURN FOR YOUR SKILL AND ACTIVITY.

DURING YOUR EIGHT YEARS TERMS OF OFFICE, AS SALES MANAGER OF FRIGIDAIRE DEPARTMENT IN THE BOMBAY GARAGE, WE TRY TO CAST OUR MEMORY AND LOOK BACK THROUGH THE GOLDEN MIST OF THAT PERIOD, IT SEEMS THAT EVERY ONE OF US WILL NEVER DENY YOUR GENEROUS CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH YOUR STAFF AND YOUR PROFOUND INTELLECT WHICH CHEERED OUR WORK AND BY WHICH YOU HAVE ENDEARED YOURSELF TO US ALL AND THUS WE SINCERELY PRESENT YOU THIS TINY TOKEN OF OUR REMEMBRANCE AND FRIENDSHIP.

BOMBAY GARAGE
FRIGIDAIRE STORES & SALES STAFF

He didn't have enough capital to start an enterprise and more than enough responsibilities. Moreover, he had a promising future with Bombay Garage. He was a Sales Manager and one of the select few Indians to have trained in refrigeration and air conditioning. MTA spoke to his company and they were supportive, seeing the obsession in his eyes. Padmi, his wife trusted the move he was making. From her perspective, this was a very risky move, but she was confident that her brilliant, hardworking husband would make his dream a reality.

So, with a mere Rs. 2,000 and the unswerving support of just two employees, an office boy named Dattu and an assistant, who was with him at Bombay Garage, called C. H. Krishnan, MTA decided to establish his new entity. And when the time came to choose a name for the fledgling company, MTA's imagination took wing. When almost everyone who started a company named it after the family or the founder, MTA wanted a name that would symbolise something more meaningful. He chose 'Blue Star' to symbolize the excellence and reliability he envisioned for his company.

MTA believed in the positive attributes of 'blue' – clear skies, conservatism, but above all, its association with the word 'cool'. He appended the sapphire hue to 'Star', the luminous celestial body that guides with its inspiring light to attain success. Sapphire, the birthstone of September, became especially symbolic, as Blue Star itself was born in that very month. Together, they came to represent the epitome of excellence, the North Star for everything the Company did, then and far into the future.





MTA founded his enterprise on September 27, 1943, and named it Blue Star Engineering Company. Birthed in a small and musty space just off Kala Ghoda in Bombay, the Company was driven by a vision that went far beyond the turmoil that was roiling the world: To provide essential cooling solutions for air, food, and water – the very elements that life depends on.

knowing they would have to throw them away by the end of the day. This contrast of avoidable loss struck him deeply, as the Bengal famine was dominating the headlines, with people suffering from food shortages, while outside Bengal, excess food was rotting in the sweltering heat. Hot, humid conditions made it extremely difficult to preserve food, as families, vendors, and the pharmaceutical industry and hospitals alike struggled without refrigeration.



Cooling provided human beings with personal comfort, food preservation, refreshing water, and safe storage of medicines. Mohan had witnessed firsthand the adverse effects of the heat on perishables. During frequent visits to the bazaar with his wife, he saw vendors selling vegetables and fish that had spoiled in the heat at significantly reduced prices,

This experience further strengthened Mohan's resolve – he realized that cooling solutions were not a luxury but an absolute necessity for India's future. He became even more determined to provide the country with the means to withstand crises such as the Bengal famine and multiple epidemics.

LIKE A MIGHTY OAK GROWING FROM GROUND UP.

Blue Star's beginning was anything but glamorous. In a leaky bamboo shed surrounded by the smell of tar and acid fumes from car batteries, MTA and his team started a journey, facing challenges every step of the way. Yet, it was like they were driven by a purpose that was far greater than they could articulate. They worked tirelessly, reconditioning old refrigerators, often working outside on the pavement to escape the oppressive indoor heat.

Everywhere MTA went, he had seen the need for critical cooling solutions. Be it preserving food in Bombay's humid climate or working with the Royal Air Force in extreme heat during the war. Talking to people in different industries highlighted the necessity of cooling solutions for food preservation and industrial processes and human comfort.



When World War II ended, MTA decided to take the Company to the next level. He realised that to scale up, he would need to partner with American collaborators because the USA was the only developed country that had both technology and an industrial base that was still intact after World War II. So, he decided to travel to the US to seek out potential partners. He came from a land of snake charmers and extreme poverty, and it wouldn't be easy for multinationals to trust him. MTA had very little money, but his people-friendly personality and sense of style made all the difference. He booked a suite at the exclusive Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City and started phoning various companies for distributorships.



They agreed to meet him out of curiosity because, at that time, India was a closed and unknown market. They hadn't done business with India before and here was someone who spoke flawless English, wanting to do business, living in the world of the Waldorf and calling them to his suite for a drink!

A DREAM STARTS TURNING INTO A LEGACY.

In 1946, Blue Star secured the distributorship of Melchior Armstrong Dessau for air conditioning equipment, along with some other dealerships, and never looked back. By the late 1940s, the Company began to carve a niche for itself in the cooling business landscape of independent India. Blue Star's ambitions expanded from refurbishing and repairing to import and distribution, and on to manufacturing. The first major manufacturing success was the production of ice candy (popsicle) machines and water coolers. However, MTA was a restless man. His journey never had a destination; the goal was always to push ahead, further and faster. In that spirit, Blue Star moved its operations from a small, inconspicuous place in Colaba, Bombay to a proper factory. This ambitious move was the first of many and marked the beginning of Blue Star's journey towards becoming a manufacturing powerhouse. At the same time, the Company brought cutting-edge technologies to India through partnerships with global leaders like

Worthington, Honeywell, Mitsubishi, and York International. In doing so, MTA underlined the conviction that leaders also have to be learners. This approach to business has never changed in the history of Blue Star. You could say this is one of the foundations on which the Company's success continues to be built.

A striking example of this was seen in the 1960s and 70s, when the Company won the air conditioning projects of Bombay's earliest skyscrapers at the city's iconic Nariman Point, the Oberoi Hotel, the Indian Express building, and the Air India building. The three largest buildings ever constructed in India until then. Blue Star not only had the air conditioning technical knowledge to execute these large projects, but also the courage to quickly develop site execution expertise and manage the cash flow. In fact, this learn-lead-learn method led the Company to develop expertise in Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing projects and to become a leader in that broader area as well.



THE DREAM THAT KEEPS GROWING BIGGER.



As MTA once said, "We grew because we didn't sit back and wait for plums to fall into our laps. When we saw our opportunities, we reached out and boldly seized them." And that's exactly how Blue Star's journey has panned out in these 80 years. Today, with a country-wide network of manufacturing facilities, a large R&D team, and a presence in over Twenty countries, Blue Star is not only one of the big brands in India but also has a strong business exporting product, knowledge, and expertise overseas. It has made a globally respected and trusted name for itself in the very areas that Mohan T Advani dreamed about many years ago.

And if you think back to where it all started, a small, leaky bamboo shed in Colaba, Bombay, you can see how far Blue Star has come in these 80 years, and how much farther it is all set to go. And it all started quite simply – one man's vision: To cool the three things that life depends on: air, food, and water.



1912 - 1974

“A man's lifework must make a contribution that reaches for the stars - beyond himself and far into the future.”

- Mohan T Advani

