

## Pravin & Sudha Mody Donate \$1 Million to Pratham

BY AMELIA MATTHEWS

**LOS ANGELES, CA** - In yet another generous act of philanthropy by an eminent member of SoCal's Indian-American community for the cause of education, Pravin and Sudha Mody have donated one million dollars to Pratham USA (PUSA). This will be used to set up a flagship mega campus for training in technical skills in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. The entire campus will be known as the Mody Technical Institute. Phase I of the project, to provide training capacity for 200 students and residential facilities for 100, will be completed by December 2016. Work on this will start soon. Phase II will be completed by December 2017.

This campus will provide residential training in courses of 3 months duration to 200 youths at



*Giving Back: The Modys look to empower through education*

a time in technical trades like electrician, welding, construction, plumbing and maintenance. The center will also function as a national "Center of Excellence" to develop expertise in new technical trades and conduct training of trainers for all centers.

The trained students will be assisted in getting employment and thus help raise their living standard.

The estimated construction cost for the project is \$1.3 million. Apart from the \$1 million donated by the Mody Family, the remainder funds will be raised through additional donors from India and the US. In around five years, Pratham hopes to expand the campus to have a facility for 400 trainees at a time.

Ahmednagar was chosen as it is a major hub for industrial activity in Maharashtra. Its proximity to Mumbai **Contd. on A8**

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also ensure easy monitoring and focus from the Pratham central office in Mumbai and convenient visits by partners like the Modys.

Pratham will use the Ahmednagar campus to impart training in technical skills that are in great demand in India with employers due to the expanding industry and shortage of skilled personnel in the field. There is a massive demand for welders, electricians, construction workers and mechanics. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) estimates that the fast growing industry would have demand for an additional 500,000 skilled welders and electricians each by 2022.

India Journal spoke with Pravin Mody who from humble beginnings achieved the American Dream. Born into a lower middle class family in Mumbai in 1940, he came to US in 1962 to study Chemical Engineering, graduating from Oklahoma University. He married Sudha in Mumbai in 1969 and is the father of two, son Ameer and daughter Sujata. Later he also got a MBA from Pepperdine University. He is the founder of GBS Linens, one of three biggest party linen supply companies in US. His daughter and son-in-law Ashesh Kamdar now run GBS Linens.

*Here are excerpts from the interview:*

**Q. Why did you chose to donate to Pratham, when there are a slew of other non-profits?**

A. For many reasons. Pratham is rated in the top category by Charity Navigator for many years and is effective in getting results at low cost. Pratham has efficient, transparent and accountable operations and is doing very important work - educating children of India, particularly those who are less fortunate aimed at eliminating the cycle of poverty.

\* I love its logo "Every child in school and learning well."

**Q. What do you hope to achieve by partnering with Pratham-ACE to create the Mody Technical Institute (PMTI)?**

A. I share the vision with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi of turning India into manufacturing giant. This will require millions of

skilled and semi-skilled workers.

PMTI and institutes like it will help to create this skilled work force. PMTI will be expanded as the need arises and resources are received.

**Q. What or who inspired you to donate:**

A. I have innumerable reasons to donate. First off a feeling of gratitude. I came to the US to study engineering with a net worth of minus \$1,200. Today we have a decent life, highly educated and happy family. I am keenly aware of all my blessings all the time. I consider it as my moral obligation to pay back to the nation where I was born (India) and nation where we flourished (US). Donating for worthy causes is simply paying back my debt. If gratitude was liquid, every ounce of me would be dripping!

When I expressed a desire to go to the US to study, my family mortgaged the family jewelry to buy my plane ticket. That day, I made a promise to myself that some day I will build an educational institute in my family name. Donating for PMTI is just fulfilling my promise.

I am also driven by my personal beliefs that money loses its importance quickly once the basic financial needs are met. You are not the owner of your assets, you are just temporary trustee. Those assets belonged to some one else before you and will belong to some one else after you.

It is your duty as the trustee to make the best use of the assets.

Use it for greater good, not just hoard it.

I have this (unfinished) theory in my mind that a person can only have one of the two relationship with money; that is; "Either money is your servant or money is your master".

Your relationship with your money affects everything you do in your life. Giving for worthy causes gives meaning to my life.

Life for me is not only about happiness. Life is about having meaning. Pratham founder, Madhav Chavan and the success of Pratham is a living proof of power of good intentions and I am proud to be a part of it.

**Q. What is the scope of your philanthropic work?**

A. Besides being an active Pratham board member since 2002, I have been fortunate enough to be involved in many worthy charitable projects including: EkalVidyalaya Foundation, South Asian Help and Referral Agency (SAHARA), Ahimsa Center at Cal Poly University at Pomona,

the Center for Family Business (CFB) at Calif. State University at Fullerton, founding partner and grand sponsor for Anaheim Health Fair and the Bidada health fairs in Kutch, India. I also support conservation organizations like Yosemite Conservancy and Sierra Club.

**Q. What are the major milestones in your life?**

A. For 14 years, I had a successful professional career in the various industries including being General Manager of a firm which manufactured life-saving medical devices.

I went into business for myself in 1981 and have bought, operated and sold businesses successfully and profitably. We bought a small laundry business in 1984. It had six employees in 2,400 square feet leased facility. This evolved into GBS Linens, Inc. with factories and warehouses in eight major cities in five states from Pacific to Atlantic and several hundred employees.

I have not allowed obstacles to stop me from growing. Heart disease runs in my family. :

I had my first heart bypass surgery in Feb. 1992 at the age of 51.

In Feb. 1993, I signed up to learn martial art, Aikido. I studied / practiced Aikido until my Sensei went back to England. I was about one year away from getting my first black belt.

I had a second heart bypass surgery in August 1998 at the age of 57.

In 2001, I started practicing to run / walk marathon.

I have completed three full marathons in 2002, 2003 and 2005 (age of 61, 62 and 64). I have completed dozens of half-marathons. In July 2014, I was found to have lung disease called Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF) due to my lungs exposed to bad chemicals during my working years in labs in 1960s and 1970s. I continue all my activities carrying oxygen-supply machine which is mandatory for my survival. IPF is considered incurable disease so far. But I plan to be active, productive and happy till my last breath.

**Q. What are your hobbies?**

A. Exercising to stay fit, reading, playing chess with my 5 grand kids. Until my lung disease in 2014, I used to go hiking. Until 2014, Sudha and I used to take four to six vacations per year since 2006. We have been to all seven continents and seen a majority of countries worth visiting

Due to my lung disease, I am not allowed to fly at this time. So we take vacations closer to home.