

## 'India Needs to Own More IPs and Build Distribution Chops'

ET Bureau Last Updated: Apr 25, 2023, 06:15 AM IST

### Synopsis

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HCLTech, which is now the country's third-largest IT services company. [Nadar](#) who has a net worth of \$28 billion is positioned at 46 in the Hurun Global Rich list, and fourth among Indian peers.

The 77-year-old technocrat who was conferred the ET Corporate Excellence Award for Lifetime Achievement 2022-23, is counted among the most consequential philanthropists the country has seen. His annual donations for fiscal 2022 topped the philanthropy list, at ₹1,161 crore or ₹3 crore per day according to the Hurun [India](#) Philanthropy list for 2022.

In an interview with ET's Romita Majumdar & Surabhi Agarwal he spoke about what the Indian technology industry must do to strengthen its product capabilities, create a sustainable culture for startups and his philanthropic vision. Excerpts

### How can India further cement its position as a tech powerhouse?

As an industry, we work with many global companies to help them build their products. But we haven't gone ahead and created many products on which we can have a copyright. We should create many more products (for ourselves). The products that we create, their IP belongs to the clients. These products are sold throughout the world. Even if it is created by us, clients have the IP, patents and the selling is done through the clients' organization. We (as a country and as an industry) need to have more products where we own [IPs](#)

and build global distribution expertise.

**What are your favorite high points of building HCL? What are some of the challenges in the journey that proved to be the most daunting?**

My greatest learning has been in ensuring HCLTech continuously grows. We moved from hardware to software, which was a very unusual pivot in the 90s in India. We focused on R&D and engineering which allowed us to innovate and change continuously. The journey has been and continues to be immensely exciting.

**After decades dedicated to philanthropic endeavors across so many different sectors, what have been your most satisfying areas of contribution?**

In my final years of high school, my father passed away, creating a financial crunch for the family. Therefore, when I was given a scholarship as a student to study at PSG Tech, it was a liberating moment in my life. I credit it as being the origins of my success. I believe that being able to focus on my studies, without the pressure of finances offered me the opportunity to thrive. I had very limited exposure at this time, and this was the beginning of my journey. This is why I feel that education can be transformative and is the key to social and economic progress. It has the full potential to empower individuals and communities and to create a better future. During my days of building HCL, when one of my deals became significantly profitable, my mother inspired me to start my philanthropic efforts by setting up the Shiv Nadar Foundation. I realized that I wanted to focus on creative philanthropy and institution building for a long-lasting impact. The first institution that I set-up is called [SSN](#), named after my father, that has now become one of the top 10 engineering colleges in Chennai.

**What are the philanthropic milestones that you are particularly proud of ?**

One of the first institutions that I set up as part of the Shiv Nadar Foundation was SSN Institutions affiliated to Anna University. I believe that merit-based students should be given the opportunity to thrive without the pressure of financial security. Given this, SSN introduced scholarships for students from rural areas to nurture deserving students' talents, maximize their potential. Besides this, I remember having a conversation with the late TSR Subramanian and we discussed the fact that there are a number of quality educational institutions in the urban areas but there was not much for meritorious, rural underserved communities. That is when the idea of VidyaGyan began to take shape. VidyaGyan has been the most satisfying philanthropic project for me.

**You have guided HCL through several economic downturns, what would be your advice to tech CEOs in the current uncertain environment?**

Stay the course. It is important for business leaders to maintain a positive mindset during uncertain times. Stay focused on your goals, stay motivated, and remain optimistic about the future.

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