

## Industry Friends & Colleagues Pay Tribute to the Stalwart...



Vijay Mehta and family with Mother Teresa at the inaugural function of Intercraft Ltd.

**Also Read :** [The Industry in the 70s was A Mix of Fun and Hard Work \(https://bit.ly/2RpZMql\)](https://bit.ly/2RpZMql)

### **‘Vijay was the first showman of the industry’ – Naresh Gujral, Span India**

As a student of Chartered Accountancy around 1972-73 and interested in fashion like all young people, I had the opportunity to visit the Akbar Hotel garment fair. I vividly recall that Vijay Mehta and his company Intercraft had an elephant standing outside with colourful fabrics, showing their booth number.

While other exporters were showing collections, Vijay was doling out free bangles & had set up complimentary henna stands ...Something so unique in those days. His stand did not show a simple garment but only trends & sketches in a huge hall which was packed to capacity with buyers sipping tea/coffee and chatting.

Vijay was the first showman – much before Vijay Mallya hit the scene. He had an uncanny ability to spot the trends in fashion, much before anyone else in the country. My first meeting with him was around 1975 when there was a quota crisis in the country. I was pleasantly surprised to meet an affable young and handsome person who enjoyed the larger-than-life image of an extremely successful entrepreneur. In those days of hippie era, every important buyer wanting to make quick money would land up in Delhi and of course Vijay’s office would be the first stop.

He and his younger brother Rahul would hire young bright men and women who they felt had fire in their belly. I can think of dozens of successful exporters who began their career with the Mehta brothers. Later on, his company and mine were fierce competitors with common buyers like Derhy,

Giorgio Kauten and Anderson brothers amongst others, but our personal relationship always remained extremely cordial.

Today when he is no more, I can only say that Vijay can be called a founding father or doyen of the very successful garment industry and I do hope that the Government would honour his memory suitably. RIP my friend!

**Also Read :** [Paying our last respect to the True Visionary of the Apparel Industry in India – Vijay Mehta, MD, Intercraft \(https://bit.ly/3aYAtCG\)](https://bit.ly/3aYAtCG)

### **‘Vijay Mehta: Pioneer, Entrepreneur, Institution, Friend’ – Gautam Nair, Matrix Clothing**

My association with Vijay goes back to the early 1980s, when as young, wet behind the ears, rookie entrepreneurs, we took our first orders for export from Intercraft – then a pioneer and a powerhouse for the nascent apparel export industry in India.

We would look at Vijay and Rahul Mehta with the awe they deserved – young guys who had helped find an industry from scratch and notched up so many entrepreneurial firsts along the way. Amongst the first to develop India as a sourcing destination for foreign brands, the first to bring to India little known brands who went on to become internationally famous, the first to set up in-house manufacturing in a state-of-the-art plant at Sahibabad, the first apparel manufacturer to get into domestic retailing, the first to launch a denim jeans brand in India with the cheeky tag of “F.U.’s”, the first to have their own label in the UK and in the US.

Vijay himself epitomised dynamism and energy. If he got interested in something, he made it his business to plunge into every detail of it. As an apparel guy, he was enthused by product and styling – and his boyish good looks and natural flair for selling made for a very powerful combination. Coals to Manchester – or snow to the Eskimos—if Vijay wanted to make it happen, consider it done. Les Wexner (Limited Brands), Doug Tomkins (North Face, Esprit), Giorgio Kauten (Italian brand by his name), Rattan Chadha (Mexx), Madame Derhy (Rene Derhy, Paris) all were enthused by working with Vijay and his team out of India.

He was an incredibly restless guy – and full of the next idea. But in all this, he realised that shortage of management bandwidth would bring any fast-growing company down. In the early 70s, he brought in top notch managers from the corporate sector in India or from top MBA schools in the US – Anil Chandra from ICI, Palli Giani from Usha Sales, Vijay Malhotra, Ravi Ahuja from Sylvania Laxman. It was Vijay’s powers of persuasion that convinced these high performers to quit their blue-chip companies and join what was then largely considered as a cottage industry. They introduced a management trainee scheme in the mid-70s—many of today’s best apparel entrepreneurs in India got their grooming from Intercraft.

I came to know Vijay as a person when I joined the Apparel Exporter & Manufacturers Association, which he had helped found. He was a warm, ever smiling, friendly guy with a wonderful sense of humour. If ever we were at a crossroads in our discussions, you could count on Vijay to step in and break the impasse – in his unique way, which left both sides accepting the outcome.

His untimely passing has come as a rude shock. I pray that God gives Manju and Nanak/Gautam/Radhika the strength to get through this tragedy. And that our industry and our Government gives this doyen of our industry the recognition that he deserves.

Rest in peace, my friend.

### **'Vijay Mehta an entrepreneur much ahead of his time' - HKL Magu, Jyoti Apparels**

I remember it as if it were yesterday, it was 1975 and I was working as a freight forwarder at the time when I first got in touch with Vijay. We began working on a regular basis and over time I was inspired by his positive, receptive, bright and energetic personality – he would be available day and night when his duties required or if someone needed his help.

From our earliest days working together and knowing each other, Vijay ji remained a kind hearted and genuine person, and treated everyone with great regard. Early on in our evolving friendship, he once told me 'you are like family'. Going out of his way to make sure I was comfortable on a trip back to my village from Delhi, he provided me a car, driver and money for the trip. This is the kind of genuine person he was, full of energy and always available for his friends and relations. His tireless commitment to his craft and industry was equally impressive.

Vijay was a master entrepreneur specialising in being ahead of fashion trends and astute at marketing; there was no brand in the fashion industry he was not in touch with or doing business with from the earliest days of the garment industry in India. He even started the first shop selling denims at South Extension Market. He has truly been a pioneer of the fashion industry and his name and positive, dynamic personality shall be remembered by our industry for years to come.

Vijay Mehta was a true entrepreneur much ahead of his time. His vision transformed a small industry into a world beater and in the process, kick-started the entire apparel industry in India. He provided the nurturing ground for so many apparel professionals who will forever remember him.

Om Shanthi.

### **'A mentor par excellence' – Alika and Jaggi Bakshi, Bakson**

We often say that the hour of death cannot be forecast, when we say this, we imagine this hour would be a distant future...I never thought I would be thinking of Vijay as a distant memory.

We will all have different memories of Vijay, but something we will all have in common, is that he was probably one of the greatest visionaries in our sphere besides being a defining point in fashion as well a truly great mentor.

I have known Vijay since my childhood...One of his best friends is my uncle. I grew up in awe of him and never imagined that one day I would work with him. Day one he sent me off to Ludhiana to make sweaters and me not knowing anything about sweater manufacturing.....and today what comes to my mind is that I was not the only one whom he bet upon without prior knowledge in garments, he simply had this knack of conveying to you that the deep end that you see is not really a deep end and with that ever trusting smile he would say to you '*Main Hoon Na*'.... I wonder if a famous actor too did not get inspired by VM...

Finally to all those who knew him, in the words of Kahil Gibran “when you are sorrowful, look again in your heart and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

Rest in peace VM!

### **‘What’s in a name’ – Rahul Mehta, Managing Director, Creative Lifestyles**

I knew Vijay Mehta very briefly in the early eighties – when I launched my Jeans Brand UFO. There were some hilarious mix-ups, particularly in the media since Vijay and Rahul Mehta ran their Brand FUs, and Vijay Agarwal and I (Rahul Mehta), ran UFO. Very often dealers placed orders on us, whilst wanting to place orders on FUs, and vice versa. The ultimate was when a leading newspaper wrote a whole article on FUs, and printed the pictures of mine and Vijay Agarwal! He wasn’t too happy at that time, but laughed about it later when we met up.

He was truly a pioneer, and a visionary. Not only was his one of the first Jeans Brand introduced in India, he also revolutionised Retail by creating one of the largest showrooms at that time in Mumbai. An extremely warm man, he was always ready to give a sardonic comment on a situation. The industry has lost a stalwart and the world a nice human being. Rest in peace, Vijay!