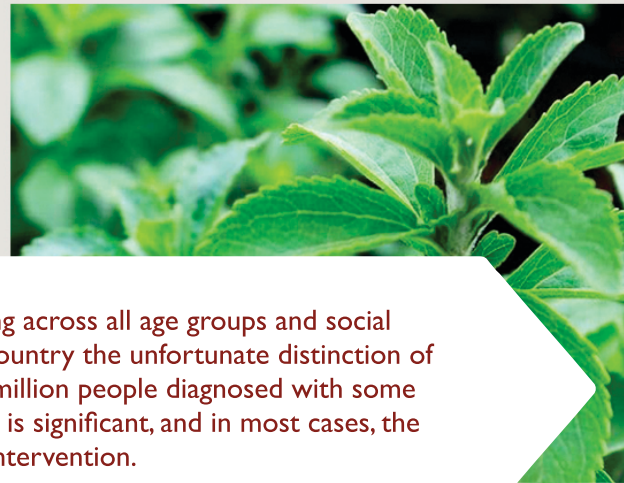


## **Bridging the Gap:** How Mr. Abhay Somani Connected Farms, Labs, and Health-Conscious Homes



Diabetes — a word feared by many — has been rapidly spreading across all age groups and social segments in India. This widespread health crisis has earned the country the unfortunate distinction of being known as “*the diabetes capital of the world*,” with over 100 million people diagnosed with some form of the disease. The financial burden of long-term treatment is significant, and in most cases, the condition remains largely irreversible despite on-going medical intervention.

**Mr. Abhay Somani**, a chartered accountant by training has spent his early years of career in corporate financing; mentoring many corporates in mergers, acquisitions, strategic planning and portfolio management. Being very health conscious himself, he was always interested in emerging areas of health and lifestyle sector. He always aspired to be a component.

Mr. Somani's aspiration to build a business in the health and lifestyle sector stems from a deep desire to make a meaningful impact on people's lives. He believes that true success lies in creating value - not just in profits, but in empowering individuals to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives. Through innovative products, honest communication, and a strong focus on well-being, he aimed to bridge the gap between preventive health and everyday living. At the same time, he saw this venture as a sustainable path to commercial success, where doing good and doing well go hand in hand. His goal was to create a brand that



stands for trust, transformation, and long-term growth - both for the people we serve and the business we build.

Mr. Somani recognized Stevia as a potent natural product for India due to its immense potential to combat the rising tide of diabetes and lifestyle disorders. Its zero-calorie sweetness offered a healthier, plant-based alternative to sugar, perfectly suited for India's growing health-conscious population. Thus, in 2011, Janus Life Sciences with Mr. Somani at the helm of it was born, which has a sole objective of doing R&D on Production and Formulation Technology that whether Stevia based sweetening formulations and manufacture products are suitable for personal uses and industrial applications.

Mr. Somani's journey toward building a business with Stevia was driven by a powerful vision - to offer a healthier, natural alternative to sugar in a world increasingly burdened by lifestyle diseases like diabetes and obesity. Witnessing the growing health crisis around him, he felt a deep urge to be part of the solution. Stevia, with its zero-calorie sweetness and plant-based origins, resonated with his belief that wellness should be rooted in nature. But more than just a product, Mr. Somani saw Stevia as a catalyst - a way to spark conversations about conscious living, to support farmers through sustainable cultivation, and to create a business that delivers both purpose and profit. His mission was clear: to make healthy choices accessible, affordable, and enjoyable for all.



interest was minimal-largely due to past negative experiences where some had entered into buyback agreements with untrustworthy companies, only to suffer significant financial losses. Word of these failures spread quickly, leading to widespread skepticism and resistance.

Extensive research at the laboratory of Janus Life Sciences, revealed the root of the problem: earlier plantations had used saplings with poor steviol glycoside content, making them unsuitable for commercial cultivation. This insight sparked a rigorous search for high-quality Stevia varieties suited to Indian agro-climatic conditions.



In 2019, the Regional-cum-Facilitation Centre, Eastern Region (RCFC-ER), National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, recognized the technical capabilities of Janus Life Sciences and entrusted it with two important research projects:

1. *Identification of High-Yielding Stevia Cultivars Suitable for the Gangetic Alluvial Regions of West Bengal, and*
2. *Quality Planting Material Production of Stevia rebaudiana through Polyploidy Induction.*

These projects played a pivotal role in identifying four high-yielding Stevia varieties well-suited for cultivation in West Bengal. As part of the research, Janus Life Sciences conducted a series of laboratory experiments and field trials in collaboration with Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, Sargachhi, West Bengal, using 11 different varieties sourced from diverse origins. Several trial varieties were obtained from overseas breeders in seed form, and a rigorous multi-generational, phenotype-marker-based genetic selection process was undertaken to develop superior lines.

Ultimately, four high-yielding and promising Stevia varieties were identified. These exhibited a total steviol glycoside content ranging from 12% to 14%, with Rebaudioside A, accounting for approximately 70% of the total glycosides. In terms of both biomass and steviol glycoside yield potential, these varieties were on par with internationally recognized high-yielding cultivars. The selected varieties were formally handed over to RCFC-ER for preservation in their nursery and germplasm bank at Jadavpur University.

Mr. Somani then shifted his focus to the extraction of steviol glycosides. The technical team at Janus Life Sciences successfully developed a small-scale extraction technology tailored for steviol glycosides. This system is capable of operating sustainably using the dry leaf yield from a 10-hectare plantation. A laboratory scale prototype of the extraction unit was built and operated successfully. The development of this small scale extraction system represents a significant step forward, as it has the potential to overcome the economy-of-scale barrier that often hinders commercial stevia extraction.

Mr. Somani takes pride in the fact that Janus Life Sciences was among the pioneering companies to introduce steviol glycoside-based standalone table top sweeteners in both sachet and liquid drop forms. Traditional steviol glycoside sweeteners often fail to replicate the taste of sugar accurately and tend to leave an undesirable aftertaste.

Determined to overcome this challenge, Mr. Somani inspired the technical team of Janus Life Sciences to undertake rigorous research aimed at developing aftertaste-free formulations-while preserving the natural characteristic and avoiding synthetic ingredients. Today, Janus Life Sciences' sweetener products are widely recognized for their exceptional taste profile and have earned strong appreciation from consumers.



Under Mr. Somani's leadership, Janus Life Sciences achieved a major breakthrough in developing a range of steviol glycoside-based pre-mixes designed for a variety of food applications. These advanced formulations accurately mimic the taste of sugar while preserving key sensory attributes such as texture, volume, mouthfeel, and appearance—areas where most commercial stevia-based sweeteners fall short. By successfully addressing these challenges, Janus Life Sciences established itself as a frontrunner in the sweetener pre-mix segment. This innovation not only set a new benchmark in the industry but also significantly contributed to the company's rapidly growing market share in this category.



The long-term outlook for the stevia products is both promising and purpose-driven. With growing awareness around lifestyle diseases and an increasing demand for natural, low-calorie alternatives, products developed and commercialized by the team led by Mr. Somani are well-positioned to lead the shift toward healthier consumption. Backed by strong R&D, consumer trust, and a commitment to clean-label, aftertaste-free formulations, the initiative aims to expand its footprint across domestic and international markets. Its focus on innovation, sustainability, and accessibility ensures that the stevia-based sweetening platform will continue to play a vital role in shaping the future of health-conscious sweetening solutions.

Mr. Abhay Somani's journey with Janus Life Sciences is a testament to how purpose-driven innovation can reshape an entire industry. What began as a personal quest to address a growing health crisis evolved into a pioneering enterprise that successfully bridged the gap between natural wellness and scientific precision. Through relentless research, ethical entrepreneurship, and a deep commitment to public health, Janus Life Sciences has not only created a trusted brand but also built a sustainable ecosystem—from farm to formulation. In a country grappling with lifestyle diseases like diabetes, Janus Life Sciences offers more than just sweeteners—it offers hope, empowerment, and a pathway to healthier living. With a strong foundation and a clear vision, Mr. Somani continues to inspire a future where doing good and doing well go hand in hand.

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