

## Chapter 4

### **Navigating the Ship through Troubled Waters: The Success Story of an Authentic Sri Lankan Venture - Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd**

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#### **Abstract**

People who see the world differently are the ones who change and develop the world. The Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd is the realisation of the dream of a young visionary leader, Mr. Dulanjana Vithanage, who perceived the world differently as a budding Sri Lankan entrepreneur. This case study unfolds the challenging yet successful story of Mr. Dulanjana, who commits to achieving Sri Lanka's development goals through an authentic and morally responsible passion. This case study also delves into the challenges faced by Mr. Dulanjana and the strategic measures he took to navigate the business through the complexities of the current turbulent environment. Using his visionary insights, Mr. Dulanjana incorporated his dream enterprise, Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd, which transformed the conventional tradition of jackfruit consumption in Sri Lanka by innovatively adding value to the wasted jackfruit surplus and turning it into an entrepreneurial triumph. The case study illustrates his divergent strategies, leadership, management capabilities and his passion for morality. Drawing extensively from insightful interviews with Mr. Dulanjana, this case study provides a comprehensive panorama of Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd. It sheds light on the company's tenacity, spotlighting its journey of triumph over challenges in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world, and emphasises its unwavering commitment to sustainability and innovation.

**Keywords:** *Innovation, Leadership, Morality, Strategy, Visionary*

## **Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd: an Overview**

Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd, established in 2017 and formerly known as 'Rish Lanka,' has undergone a transformative evolution, culminating in a strategic name change in 2022 to reflect its growth and development. This dynamic company has steadily climbed the business landscape, achieving remarkable success through a meticulous and evolutionary process. The present status of Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd is propelled by a seasoned and proficient management team with extensive experience, led by the visionary entrepreneur, Mr. Dulanjana. Since its inception in 2017, Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd has prioritized delivering a unique range of products to its customers, placing emphasis on taste, quality, and nutrition. The company specializes in manufacturing a diverse range of high quality and novel products, encompassing dehydrated fruits and vegetables, noodle products, and various snacks made out of jackfruit. This commitment to quality and innovation has contributed to the company's sustained and continuous growth as well as the positive reputation and image in the market. Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd's journey reflects not only a commitment to providing high-quality products but also a proactive approach to adapting and thriving in the ever-evolving business landscape. As the company continues to make strides in research and development, it remains a key player in the market, offering a diverse and innovative range of jackfruit-based products to the consumer market.

### **Seeing a Treasure from a Waste**

In the picturesque village of Gunukudahena, nestled within the enchanting southern province of Sri Lanka, a hidden gem thrives amidst the abundance of nature's bounty. Lush landscapes, adorned by jackfruit trees, coconut palms, mango groves, and orange orchards, paint the scenery of Gunukudahena, making it a haven for agricultural riches. However, the village faced a unique challenge – an excess harvest of jackfruit that often exceeded the local demand. This surplus became more than just an agricultural concern; it transformed into a community-wide issue as 90% of the jackfruit harvest went to waste, cluttering roads and emitting unpleasant odours as the fruit spoiled.

This dilemma prompted young Dulanjana from Gunukudahena who a driven undergraduate specializing in marketing at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura at that time was, to contemplate a solution. Guided by his soft insights together with marketing and business knowledge acquired from the university, Mr. Dulanjana envisioned a way to turn this apparent waste into a valuable resource. After a deep analysis of the impact of ripped and rotten jackfruit in the village and its environment, he saw a great opportunity and made a bold decision to capitalise on wasted jackfruit. His entrepreneurial instincts combined with moral values inspired him to embark on the journey to create jackfruit-based products that would not only add value to the excess harvest but also contribute to the economic well-being of the Gunukudahena villagers.

In 2017, Mr. Dulanjana, driven by entrepreneurial zeal and armed with a degree in Marketing from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, embarked on a visionary venture centred around this untapped potential of jackfruit. This marked the birth of "Rish Lanka," a business poised to capitalize on the abundance of jackfruit in Gunukudahena village. The debut product, a jackfruit toffee, quickly gained traction, reflecting the market's initial appetite for innovative

jackfruit-based offerings. However, as is often the case in entrepreneurial pursuits, the venture encountered a challenge that would test Mr. Dulanjana's resolve and ingenuity. The toffee, despite its popularity, faced setbacks due to a limited expiration period, necessitating a strategic pivot to ensure sustained success in the evolving landscape of jackfruit-based products. Undeterred by the initial hiccup, Mr. Dulanjana's journey through 2017 became a testament to his resilience and adaptability, setting the stage for the transformative evolution of his business. Undeterred by the initial product's challenges, Mr. Dulanjana's entrepreneurial mindset and dedication shone through as he delved into research and hard work to reposition the business. The result was the introduction of a new product named "Kosposha," a nutritious supplement food made from jackfruit seed, emphasizing the nutritional value of jackfruits. This product, the culmination of 33 developmental iterations, became the cornerstone of Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd, the current name of the company.

As part of a strategic initiative in 2022, Mr. Vithanage opted to rebrand the company as "Jack Fruit Ceylon PLC." This choice arose since the initial name, "Rish Lanka," did not seamlessly align with the growing product line and presented pronunciation challenges. His decision to rename the company demonstrates the qualities of an experienced strategist, who senses the right time of strategic reorientation of the company and Mr. Dulanjana's commitment to aligning the company's identity with its diverse and evolving product offerings. Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd.'s transformation from a toffee-centric startup to a thriving enterprise specializing in jackfruit-based products is a testament to Mr. Dulanjana's entrepreneurial acumen. His qualities of resilience, creativity and innovation and market adaptability reflects not only his strategic mind but also a deep passion for sustainable business practices. As Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd continues to flourish, it stands as a beacon of successful entrepreneurship and a model for turning the agricultural surplus into valuable, marketable products.

The jackfruit waste, which was the origin of Mr. Dulanjana's entrepreneurial venture, was mainly caused by the lack of food preservation methods coupled with the busy lifestyles individuals. Further, this busyness was capitalized by the fast-food industry letting the traditional food preservations methods fade away. It is worthy to note that, in Sri Lanka, jackfruit, known as "Kos," represents more than just a fruit; it symbolizes the cultural heritage, agricultural significance, and culinary richness of the nation. Prominently influenced by Arthur V. Dias, known as "Kos Mama," who was a key figure in promoting its cultivation, jackfruit shaped the country's agricultural and cultural landscapes. Originally introduced by Indian traders, it found its niche in Sri Lanka's tropical climate, becoming a dietary staple and a versatile ingredient in various dishes, ranging from savoury curries to sweet desserts. Its presence was strongly felt in local festivals and social events, where the preparation and sharing of jackfruit dishes were a communal activity, reinforcing social bonds and cultural identity. However, the evolution of Sri Lankan cuisine and the influx of fast food and processed alternatives have led to a decline in the traditional use of jackfruit. This shift, driven by urbanization, modernization, and changing lifestyles, has not only diminished the culinary diversity that jackfruit offers but also overlooked its nutritional and ecological benefits. The fruit's relegation from the culinary scene has resulted in a loss of cultural heritage and sustainable practices. Despite this decline, efforts by individuals and organizations are underway to revive jackfruit's significance, focusing on its health, environmental, and cultural

values. Mr. Dulanjana is such a figure who made his ultimate endeavour to bring out a successful product line using jackfruit.

## **Silverline in the Dark Cloud**

### ***Evolution of the Company and the Structure***

The invention of the new product, Kosposha, after the failure of the jackfruit toffee, marked a new beginning in Rish Lanka, Mr. Dulanjana's venture, and has gone through 33 development versions thus far. This evolutionary strategy reflected the company's dedication to refining its products, ensuring they meet the highest quality standards and taste. Meanwhile, Mr Dulanjana recognised the necessity of renaming the company to align with the new product that better reflects the core of the business. Consequently, in 2022, Rish Lanka was renamed as Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd'. This rebranding transcended the name issues and was well-positioned as a brand synonymous with innovation and excellence in the jackfruit product sector.

In its early stages, the company primarily focused on producing jackfruit-related products as a solution to address the issue of jackfruit wastage. While recognizing the importance of being customer-focused, Mr Dulanjana acted foresightedly by conceptualizing and developing new product ideas that satisfy the evolving needs of customers.

At present, Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd Ltd boasts a seasoned and proficient management team, spearheaded by two visionary directors. These directors bring a wealth of experience to the company, guiding it towards continued success and innovation. The management team comprises key roles, including a Marketing Manager, a Sales Manager, and a Finance Manager.

The Marketing Manager and Sales Manager hold permanent positions within Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd, contributing their expertise to drive the company's market presence and sales growth. Simultaneously, the Finance Manager, though a part-time position, plays a crucial role in overseeing the financial aspects of the company. To further enhance financial management capabilities, an Assistant Finance Manager has been employed in a permanent capacity, ensuring a robust financial framework for the organization. Complementing the management team, six dedicated employees are working under the guidance of the Operations Manager. This team is instrumental in executing the day-to-day operations, contributing to the efficiency and smooth functioning of company.

### ***Expansion of the Product Range***

Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd expanded its product range gradually within a short period of time and today they own range of products made out from Jackfruit namely Kosposha, Kos Noodles, Kirikos Maluwa, and Kos Bytes. This strategic expansion has proven successful, with the demand for these products experiencing a significant surge. Consumers are drawn to the unique offerings, guided by the perception that jackfruit-derived products are not only healthy but also environmentally friendly. This consumer perception is grounded in reality, as all products undergo rigorous laboratory testing supervised by field experts. The commitment

to quality assurance ensures that Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd delivers on its promise of providing innovative, reliable and healthy jackfruit-based products. This moral approach to meeting consumer expectations has positioned Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd in a more unique position within the market.

### **Learning through Failure**

Failures are beautiful memories of the history of successful business, often paving the way for valuable lessons and insights, though they are painful at the time of occurrence. Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd 's experience is different. Mr. Dulanjana's remarkable journey in conceptualizing and creating the innovative product, 'Kosposha,' was truly exceptional, yet challenging. Mr Dulanjana encountered a range of challenges, including technological complexities and the market viability of the product; his resilient character overcame such challenges by taking them as stepping stones for growth and refinement.

In Mr Dulanjana's journey, the foremost challenge he confronted was bringing a novel product that meets the quality expectations of the consumer. This required him to go through a new learning process of adopting a new technology, testing, and quality assurance. His boundless curiosity for learning and the acquisition of new knowledge enabled him to make the right choices on technology through trial and error. It is worth noting that his desire for learning was not limited to the initial stage of his business; going beyond that, as of today, he has been able to foster a research and learning culture that continuously motivates innovation. The initial product, "toffee," faced challenges due to its short shelf life. This prompted the owner to strategically reassess the product line. Understanding the significance of tackling this crucial challenge, a new product with a significantly prolonged expiration period was introduced after experimenting with thirty-three different versions of the initial product, aiming to ensure market viability. Each version represented a dedicated effort to enhance the product's characteristics, considering factors such as taste, packaging, and, most importantly, the duration it remained viable in the market.

Lack of national-level support for small entrepreneurs was another problem experienced by the Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd. This issue was apparent in finding the financial sources to invest in the business. For instance. Mr Dulanjana's application for a two million bank loan was rejected by the bank following their strict loan recovery policies. Lack of the availability of financial support made a considerable impact on financial stability and growth prospects of the company at the initial stage. Nevertheless, this could not discourage Mr Dulanjana, he converted this challenge to another learning experience and navigated his business towards success.

### **Navigating the Ship through Troubled Waters**

In the dynamic and challenging landscape of today's business world, businesses confront an unprecedented level of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). This demanding environment requires entrepreneurs to embody nimbleness, adaptability, and strategic foresight as they endeavour to transform their ventures into success stories. Against

this backdrop, the journey of a startup, like Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd, becomes a delicate dance between navigating uncertainties and seizing opportunities. Mr. Dulanjana's entrepreneurial dream, unfolds as a compelling narrative, showcasing how an entrepreneur can steer the business venture through the storms of the VUCA world. His story becomes a testament to the strategic responses required to address challenges that arise within the VUCA world. This section explores how Mr. Dulanjana not only survived, but also thrived towards the success, embodying the resilience and adaptability needed in the contemporary turbulent environment.

### ***Resource Optimization and Networking***

Mr. Dulanjana's innovative use of wasted jackfruit as a primary ingredient of a range of products showcases resource optimization; otherwise, ripped, and rotten jackfruits may waste unproductively. In a time where *sustainability* has become the global vision, his choice to use local ingredients like jackfruit is a timely, important decision. In addition, Mr. Dulanjana's networking capability is worth paying attention. Mr. Dulanjana recognises that it is paramount to foster robust networks with the stakeholder for the survival and prosperity of his business. His strategic approach to networking extended beyond external interactions, permeating the internal dynamics of Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd. Acknowledging his extroverted personality, Mr. Dulanjana prioritises external networking with stakeholders outside the company. This proactive approach allows him to build strong connections with various external parties critical to the business's success, such as government-related authorities and fellow entrepreneurs. During the product development stage, he maintained a close relationship with the Department of Food Science of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, and he continuously maintains a strong bond with institutional bodies such as the District Secretary Office, the Export Development Board, and the "Widatha" foundation. Establishing connections with these entities not only contributed to gaining valuable support for the business but also positioned Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt)Ltd within broader economic initiatives. Relationships with suppliers are also a vital aspect of the networking of Mr Dulanjana. This strategic relationship with suppliers ensures minimal disruptions to the business's supply chain amidst the unanticipated market fluctuations.

A unique feature of his networking is his solidarity with his fellow entrepreneurs. Mr. Dulanjana participated in numerous business forums, award ceremonies, and events not only to acquire knowledge and experience but also to foster connections with fellow entrepreneurs. Leveraging his network from the university where he studied, Mr. Dulanjana received substantial support in the initial stages of the business. This exemplifies the value of maintaining connections with educational institutions and tapping into industry networks for mentorship, guidance, and collaborative opportunities. The open and friendly culture that Mr Dulanjana has enunciated within Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd is another core competency of the business that prompts quick adjustments, enhanced coordination, and reduced conflicts, aligning the workforce toward achieving company goals effectively. Having networks externally and internally strengthens its resilience. It opened doors for Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd to capitalise on collaborative opportunities and diversify support networks, essential for navigating the challenges inherent in the business landscape.

### ***Instilling a Learning Culture***

In the intricate and uncertain VUCA world, Mr. Dulanjana's unwavering commitment to establishing a learning culture is an exemplary practice. His proactive approach to disseminating information about ingredients, production processes, and branding proved indispensable, empowering employees to navigate swiftly through the ever-changing landscape. Rather than merely delegating tasks, Mr. Dulanjana prioritises the transmission of knowledge to all levels of the workforce, fostering a culture where information and knowledge are shared assets.

This approach extends beyond efficiency in task execution; it reflects a forward-thinking strategy for managing ambiguity and complexity. As the owner of the business, Mr. Dulanjana is committed to cultivate a workforce that not only performs tasks effectively but also effectively contributes to decision-making. Rejecting a mindset of hierarchical task allocation, he strives to equip employees with comprehensive knowledge about ingredients, production processes, new technologies, and branding within their respective fields. The proven outcome of this approach is a highly effective and efficient workforce within Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd, instilled with a sense of ownership and significance within the business. By sharing his knowledge generously, Mr. Dulanjana has transformed employees from mere workers into invaluable members of the company.

### ***Fostering the Financial Resilience***

Confronting financial challenges head-on, Mr. Dulanjana showcased remarkable adaptability and innovativeness in the face of economic volatility. Initially encountering difficulties securing loans due to scepticism about the business's survival, Mr. Dulanjana's tenacity and negotiation skills enabled him to secure financial support from banks. Despite the initial low profits, he proactively addressed the financial barrier adopting alternative means, demonstrating a positive and dedicated approach to managing limited financial resources.

### ***Managing through the Crisis***

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and local economic crises on Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd have not been different. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to businesses worldwide, and Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd was no exception. With The disruptions in the supply chain, curfew restrictions, inflation, and rising interest rates created a challenging environment for the venture to pursue its regular business operations. Yet, being a resilient entrepreneur, Mr. Dulanjana has been able to manage the situations appropriately so that the smooth functioning of the business operations is ensured. Instead of succumbing to the hardships, he directed efforts towards research and development even during the pandemic. This innovative approach resulted in the introduction of several new products, providing a counterbalance to the revenue losses incurred during the crisis.

### ***Global Expansion Strategy***

Illustrating the qualities of a farsighted business leader, Mr. Dulanjana makes a radical decision to expand the business operations from local market into the global market by turning challenges into opportunities. As a solution to the increasing cost of production and

unstable economic conditions prevailing in the country, Mr. Dulanjana decided to step into the global market by utilising his strengths of continuous learning, research culture, and networking. As a result of his global expansion strategy, currently, Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd exports its noodles products to leading export destinations such as Qatar, Dubai, and South Korea.

### **The Power of Visionary Leadership in Shaping**

Leadership is a vital aspect of the success or failure of an entity. It is notable that the revolutionary entrepreneur, Mr. Dulanjana, guides Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd on a unique path towards success. His choices, behaviour, and values exhibit the qualities of vision, authenticity, morality, and entrepreneurship. Since the beginning of his entrepreneurial journey, he has been a visionary person, always gazing toward the horizon, anticipating the next trend, and waiting for the next big opportunity. His strategic guidance ensures the company is not just keeping up with the times but setting the pace. He communicates his vision with clarity and passion, aligning the entire team with the company's long-term goals. His style is a text of inspiration and effectiveness, woven with inclusive decision-making, hands-on involvement, open communication, and extraordinary interpersonal skills. Mr. Dulanjana's journey as a leader is marked by his unwavering belief in the power of collective wisdom. He often gathers his employees, from interns to managers, and seeks their insights on critical decisions. In these inclusive roundtables, every opinion is a valued treasure, sparking innovation and problem-solving from the most unexpected quarters. His employees don't just work for the company; they feel as if they are part of a grand, shared mission. What he cultivates is a space that inspires positivity, support, and growth. He understands that a motivated workforce is the cornerstone of any successful business, and he endeavours to make every employee feel valued and part of something greater than themselves.

Unlike leaders who steer from a distance, Mr. Dulanjana is always in the thick of things. Be it a major project or a minor task, he is there, shoulder to shoulder with his team, leading by example. This approach makes him more than a boss; he is a mentor, a comrade. His commitment is infectious, setting a benchmark for dedication that inspires everyone to give their best. Mr. Dulanjana reinforces the culture of open dialogue and transparency by making it the way of his company. This culture of openness makes his employees feel empowered and integral to the organisation's success. In fact, empowerment is a key theme in Mr. Dulanjana's leadership symphony. He doesn't just delegate tasks; he empowers his team with the autonomy to make decisions, providing the necessary resources and support. This empowerment instils a sense of pride and accountability in their work, sparking innovation and driving efficiency. Also, Mr. Dulanjana champions the ethos of continuous learning and improvement, and he nurtures a culture where professional development is not just encouraged; but is celebrated. This commitment to growth keeps the Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd agile and competitive, as employees constantly bring fresh skills and perspectives to their roles. Another feature of his authentic leadership is that he is a mastermind of extraordinary interpersonal skills, seamlessly connecting with people from all walks of life. These connections are not just limited to the organisation but spread far into the external business



landscape, creating a network of collaboration, knowledge exchange, and opportunities as illustrated in the previous section of this case study. The next vital aspect of Mr. Dulanjana's leadership style is his morality. His choices for sourcing sustainable ingredients locally, making organic products, and exceptional concern over the local community demonstrates his socio-ethical character.

### **From survival to Sustainability**

Report 6, published at the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) summit in 2023, points out that every inch of progress in the choices and behaviour of individuals, groups, and organisations matters and counts in pursuing SDGs in 2030. The same report echoes the necessity of embarking on bold and transformational decisions by the actors on this planet to make the SDGs a reality. In this global urgency, Mr. Dulanjana's innovative thought to produce a healthy products out of wasted jackfruit seeds was a bold decision reflecting his altruistic business philosophy to serve a broader society. Mr. Dulanjana's qualities of being authentic and innovative transcend achieving his self-interest and developing a sustainable world. The expansion of his product line from jackfruit toffee, jackfruit serial (Kosposha), jackfruit noodles, and jackfruit curry to jackfruit bytes exhibits the continuation of his primary entrepreneurial motive to produce organic and healthy products by adding value to nature. As a small but responsible entrepreneurial entity, the contribution of Jack Fruit Ceylon to SDGs is substantial. Jack Fruit Ceylon makes a balanced contribution to the triple bottom line—social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainable development. Mr. Dulanjana's groundbreaking thought to make something out of wasted jackfruit itself is a major concern of SDGs Food waste is a global issue where 931 million tons of food is wasted annually, according to the United Nations. Despite the food wastage, millions of people are suffering from hunger worldwide. Against this backdrop, Mr Dulanjana's idea to produce a range of food products from wasted jackfruits that are organic and healthy for people is a revolutionary innovation that promotes sustainable production as well as consumption, improving the well-being of the broader society.

It's a part of Mr. Dulanjana's overall philosophy to deliver healthy foods to the people. Inspired by this idea, Jack Fruit Ceylon products come to the market with pure nutritional value without destroying their original value by adding artificial ingredients. This 'organic food' concept is a deeply rooted value of Mr. Dulanjana, and it serves Good health and wellbeing. As a continuation of this best practice, Mr. Dulanjana plans to introduce a new range of organic and healthy food products made from cassava, which is highly accepted in Sri Lankan society as a vegetable with high medicinal value.

As a small entrepreneurial business, Jack Fruit Ceylon plays a role model position in relation to the environmentally friendly practices that eventually contribute to climate change and poverty alleviation. Mr. Dulanjana purchases all his raw materials requirements locally. The supply of raw materials locally contributes to both environmental and economic sustainability. Concerning jackfruit and cassava, both are locally planted, traditional food varieties frequently available in rural Sri Lanka. Both crops could be planted and grown without chemical fertilizers and pesticides. A particular concern of Mr. Dulanjana is sourcing jackfruit-related materials only from naturally grown jackfruit trees rather than adopting short-term but technology-driven trees.

Moving further, it could be illustrated how beautifully Mr. Dulanjana serves his local community, explains in detail in the next section. His contribution to the local people is not limited to local raw materials supply and providing employment opportunities. Going beyond, Mr. Dulanjana demonstrates a community leadership role. He facilitates marginalised local community to overcome their poverty issues in multiple ways. Mr. Dulanjana informs and educates schooling and young children about the importance of having higher education and how education becomes a source of poverty alleviation. Further, he supports several other small businesses through knowledge sharing and playing a leadership role in networking with government authorities such as the Export Development Board, VIDATHA<sup>1</sup>, and Wiyawasayakathwa Sabawa (Entrepreneurial Society/Board). Through such involvement, he expects to build a strong entrepreneurial community that can make a strong economic contribution, significantly alleviating rural poverty by educating the local entrepreneurs and supplying them with necessary knowledge and resources.

As a whole, Mr. Dulanjana makes a remarkable contribution to the well-being of Sri Lankans as the world only has six more year remaining to accomplish the global sustainability agenda. Our country requires more such entrepreneurs who are truly motivated by socio-ethical principles rather than a sole focus on profit.

### **The Entrepreneurial Tapestry: Weaving Community Empowerment into Business Dynamics**

In the tapestry of entrepreneurship, the narrative of Mr. Dulanjana, the forward-thinking founder of Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd, unfolds as a captivating exploration of transcending traditional business models. While the mainstream business discourse often emphasizes profit margins and market share, entrepreneurs like Mr. Dulanjana recognize the profound significance of community empowerment as an intrinsic element in their ventures. It is interesting to delve into the roots of community empowerment within entrepreneurial frameworks and examine how Mr. Dulanjana and his entrepreneurial venture embodies these principles in its operational philosophy.

As evidenced throughout this case study, Mr. Dulanjana and Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd embraces community empowerment, a nuanced and multifaceted idea that spans social, economic, and cultural dimensions of development. It aligns seamlessly with the principles of sustainable entrepreneurship, advocating for businesses to not only thrive economically but also contribute positively to the communities they serve. Some unorthodox initiatives of Mr. Dulanjana such as empowering other local entrepreneurs in the area argue that the success of an entrepreneurial venture should be measured not solely by financial metrics but by its capacity to uplift and empower the local community.

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<sup>1</sup> A government institution established to empower micro, small & medium industrialists with technology, quality and standards.

### ***Cultivating Social Capital***

Within the context of entrepreneurial ventures, the cultivation of social capital emerges as a dynamic force shaping community empowerment. Social capital encompasses the intricate web of networks, relationships, and shared values that bind a community together. Entrepreneurs who actively engage and contribute to these social networks are not merely conducting business; they are fostering trust and credibility within the community. Through genuine interactions and meaningful contributions, entrepreneurs lay the groundwork for enduring relationships with local stakeholders, customers, and partners. In light of this, Mr. Dulanjana's initiatives are remarkable as the Jack Fruit Ceylon has crossed the boundaries of a traditional business model by establishing a lasting web of mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders. The association of entrepreneurs in the local area, for instance, is such an initiative. Further to the establishment of this association, the links have been established with relevant government authorities such as the Galle District Secretariat and the Export Development Board so that the entrepreneurial development is nurtured smoothly.

The process of cultivating such social capital is akin to sowing seeds in fertile soil, where the entrepreneur's commitment to community engagement yields a harvest of trust. As social bonds strengthen, the entrepreneur becomes an integral part of the community fabric, transcending the transactional nature of business, which is now the case of Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd. This relational approach fosters ongoing support, creating a symbiotic relationship wherein the success of the business becomes intertwined with the prosperity of the community it serves.

### ***Prioritizing Sustainable Economic Development***

In the entrepreneurial journey towards community empowerment, sustainable economic development emerges as a spotlight, transcending the traditional model of resource extraction. Successful entrepreneurs recognize the imperative to go beyond profit margins and embrace a holistic approach that catalyses long-term economic growth for both the business and the community. This transformative approach involves more than the creation of job opportunities; it extends to supporting local suppliers and investing in skill development. Entrepreneurs become catalysts for economic empowerment by not only providing employment but also nurturing the skills and talents within the community. Through targeted investments in education and training, the entrepreneur contributes to a skilled workforce that can drive not only the success of the business but also broader economic prosperity within the local ecosystem. There is ample evidence demonstrating how Mr. Dulanjana and Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd have prioritized sustainable economic development. Local sourcing, for instance, is such an important aspect of the business model where the Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd has empowered local communities to be partnered with the business as Jackfruit suppliers. The substance of this approach has further been deepened by the initiatives such as conducting entrepreneurial skill development programmes for the local community and developing access roads to the village by the business itself.

Accordingly, the entrepreneur, in this context, becomes an agent of change, steering away from exploitative practices to ones that nurture sustainable economic development. By prioritizing the well-being and advancement of the community, the entrepreneur establishes a

foundation for resilience, ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are distributed equitably and endure over time.

### ***Integrating Cultural Preservation and Identity***

In the entrepreneurial landscape, cultural preservation and identity take on a transformative role, evolving from peripheral considerations to integral components of business ventures. Entrepreneurs who recognize the importance of preserving local identities contribute not only to the social fabric but also enhance the authenticity of their products or services. Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd, unarguably, is a pioneer in light of this as the preservation of the local cultural identity is central to the business model. At the root of the business, Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd has identified the symbolic value of the Jackfruit as a crop which is embedded in Sri Lankan culture. Further, throughout the operational and marketing processes of the business, the cultural identity of the Jackfruit is emphasized.

By integrating cultural preservation into business models, entrepreneurs like Mr. Dulanjana become guardians of local heritage. This involves not only respecting cultural nuances but actively participating in initiatives that contribute to the preservation of traditions, languages, and customs. As a result, the entrepreneur's venture becomes more than a commercial entity; it becomes a custodian of cultural heritage. Apparently, Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd is on its way to become the guardian of the *jackfruit* cultural heritage in Sri Lanka through innovation linked to the heritage.

It is noteworthy that such a commitment to cultural preservation also serves as a unique selling proposition (USP) for products and services. Consumers, particularly those who value authenticity and cultural diversity, are drawn to businesses like Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd that go beyond commodification and actively contribute to the preservation of local identities. In essence, entrepreneurs like Mr. Dulanjana become storytellers, weaving the rich tapestry of culture into the products they offer, creating a connection with consumers that transcends mere transactions.

In the practical realm, the narrative of Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd and Mr. Dulanjana's entrepreneurial journey emerges as an exemplary case study that seamlessly integrates theoretical concepts into business practices. The company's commitment to sustainability is palpable in its local sourcing of raw materials, providing stability to suppliers and enhancing economic well-being. Jack Fruit Ceylon (Pvt) Ltd pioneers' skill development programs within the community, creating employment opportunities and elevating the overall skill set of the local entrepreneurs. Aligning with the TBL framework, the company implements eco-friendly production practices, minimizes its environmental footprint and resonates with consumers who prioritize responsible products.

In conclusion, the entrepreneurial tapestry woven by visionaries like Mr. Dulanjana reflects the transformative potential of community empowerment. Going beyond conventional business practices and embracing a holistic approach allows entrepreneurs to not only thrive in the market but also contribute meaningfully to the communities they operate in, fostering a sustainable and impactful business legacy.

## Annexures

*Annexure 01: Company Logo*



*Annexure 02: Package of Kosposha Product*



*Annexure 03: Empowering the local small-scale Entrepreneurs.*

