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**Paranjpe elevation shines light on
Indians rising up Unilever's ranks**

With former HUL head Nitin Paranjpe's elevation as Unilever COO, the spotlight is on a growing league of Indians, who have worked at HUL and later played a larger role at the parent. **See Page 7**

Spotlight on Indian talent with Unilever's new hires

Among EMS, India is among the largest contributors of top executives to Unilever

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Last week, Unilever Plc named Nitin Paranjpe as chief operating officer, reaffirming its trust in the vast talent ecosystem the Anglo-Dutch consumer goods giant has cultivated and nourished in India over decades.

Paranjpe, a former head of Unilever's India unit Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) and till now the global head of its foods and refreshments business, is among the growing league of Indians who have worked at HUL and have later played a larger role at the parent.

Currently, 200 employees of HUL are working on global assignments within Unilever, making India one of the largest contributors of top talent among all emerging markets for the company.

Some of them are Rohit Jawa, currently executive vice-president (EVP), North Asia; Hemant Bakshi, EVP Unilever Indonesia; J.V. Raman, EVP, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus; Kedar Lele, chief executive officer (CEO) and managing director (MD), Unilever Bangladesh; and Sanjiv Kakkar, EVP Middle East North Africa, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, among others.

That apart, over the years, 400 HUL executives have moved on to become CEOs across the world and across industries. These include Sudhanshu Vats, group CEO, Viacom18 Media; Mohit Anand, Kellogg's MD for South Asia; Vineet Taneja, currently MD, Dyson India; Gopal Vital, MD and CEO (India and South Asia) of Bharti Airtel, among others. HUL is rightfully known as a leadership factory, "exporting talent to Unilever and to the industry at large", a company spokesperson said over email.

Additionally, three Indians are now part of Unilever Leadership

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PRADEEP GAUR/MINT



In the top rung

Three Indians are now part of Unilever Leadership Executive, an 11-member body that includes the company's top C-Suite executives across key functions

● Hindustan Unilever ● Unilever



NITIN PARANJPE

- Chief executive officer, 2008-2013
- Chief operating officer



LEENA NAIR

- Executive director (human resources), 2007-2013
- Chief HR officer



SANJEEV MEHTA

- Chairman and managing director
- President South Asia

Executive (ULE)—an 11-member body that includes Unilever's C-Suite executives across key functions—after it elevated Sanjeev Mehta, current chairman and MD of HUL to the ULE. Leena Nair, a former HUL hand, and now Unilever's chief human resources officer, is also part of the ULE.

India, where HUL dominates the fast moving consumer goods market, continues to be an exporter of talent, starting with T. Thomas,

global leaders, B.P. Biddappa, executive director, human resources, HUL, said in a phone interview.

Additionally, since India has gained ground as an important market for Unilever—in 2018, India's contribution was 9% of Unilever's global turnover—talent from India has become visible within the global parent as well. HUL, which reported sales of ₹34,619 crore in fiscal year (FY) 2018, is India's largest consumer

eral management perspective," said Biddappa.

"HUL has always been a magnet for good talent, starting right from the campus recruits that join the company. The initial training at HUL is fantastic as it grounds you into the reality of the business. Gives you very good exposure to all the functions and to hinterland India. It truly is unrivalled in the industry," said Sandeep Kataria, current CEO of Bata India, who worked both at HUL, and then Unilever till 2010. Also, given India's complexity as a market, it gives you that exposure to handle other markets, he added.

It also helps that over the last decade, more Indians have become open to overseas postings, quite early in their career.

"What's happening is that increasingly, people are looking for international experiences even earlier on. Twenty years ago, people might have gone out a little later in their careers; now they are happy to go out in the first eight to 10 years and that shapes a very different perspective and skill set," Biddappa added.

A BREEDING GROUND FOR TALENT

CURRENTLY 200 employees of HUL are working on global assignments within Unilever.

OVER the years, 400 HUL executives have become CEOs across the world and across industries.

AS India became an important market for Unilever, talent from India also became visible within the firm.

IN 2018, India unit Hindustan Unilever's contribution was 9% of Unilever's global turnover.

Ashok Ganguly and Keki Dadiseth, all former chairmen of HUL who went on to play larger roles within Unilever back in the 1990s and early 2000s, to more recent appointments such as Paranjpe, Mehta and Nair.

The company's practice of making employees work across functions and navigate the volatile sales channel that relies heavily on local non-pop stores has helped create

goods firm. Since FY10, its sales have nearly doubled.

"The fact that we give early big jobs from HUL—they work in operations, and in factories; sales and in the field, and we have people who do careers across functions... so, a human resources person will do both corporate and factory HR. They are given very strong, big jobs early on and that builds a strong sense of leadership and a good gen-