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I was meditating in a Himalayan cave when suddenly, a vision: swaths of indigo denim stretched across the ceiling of the cosmos in unending, folding waves. Then, ribbons of white light tumbled and streamed through them imprinting a bleached pastel texture of unbelievable beauty.

This is how HINDUISM TODAY wildly imagined the discovery of the billion-dollar acid-washed jeans process when we heard a Hindu had a hand in it. But to hear the real story, we tracked down the "Da Vinci of denims" at his El Paso, Texas, plant. Big surprise. "Actually the idea really wasn't mine; it came from Italy," opened Mr. Hojiwala with sobering but likable matter-of-factness. "One of Levi's merchandisers saw it at a trade show. They asked me to duplicate it." So the 47-year-old textile chemist dutifully checked into Levi's operating rooms, pummeled and tumbled imported Equadorian pumice stones (soaked in potassium permanganate) against denim cloth in every way imaginable and emerged a week later with his version of an acid-washed jean - far surpassing the Italian prototype. Levi's paid him his weekly salary, revved up acres of stone/cloth tumblers into overtime production, shipped the jean sensation to every country that wore pants and grossed a few extra billion dollars. "I didn't get a penny more," Mr. Hojiwala told HINDUISM TODAY with a long, hearty laugh. "That's the problem working for somebody else."

Though Levi's didn't make him a millionaire, they had long been aware that one of the garment industry's ace chemists played on their team - and jealously prized Hojiwala's precious expertise. Even before his acid-washed jean razzle-dazzle feat, the jeans giant honored him with their highest recognition, the Koshlind award.

But if you peeped in a window of the Hojiwala's Walnut Creek, California, home any morning as the sun was rising, you wouldn't recognize the brilliant chemist. Dawn and eve, without fail, God - not vials and tumblers - occupies his finest moments as he performs daily puja and worships the Cosmic Inventor. His philosophy? "Even if you talk about religion just one minute, follow what you say in practice. Don't be a

hypocrite. We Hindus unfortunately talk too much about God and religion and when it comes to business, we are not the most honest people. I would tell young men, "Be honest." Don't be greedy. Listen to your conscience. If it says, 'This is wrong,' it's wrong, no matter what others say! Money comes and goes, but your conscience stays with you until you die."

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