



SCIENCE

FIND A WAY OR MAKE ONE

GARUDA AEROSPACE

By Sharath Chandra



The corporate philosophy of Garuda Aerospace Limited can be summarized in six uncompromising words: Find a way or make one. It is a behavioural blueprint directly inherited from its founder and CEO, Agnishwar Jayaprakash, a man who famously made headlines when he gave up a highly coveted, merit-based medical school seat to pursue competitive swimming, and later defied standard startup conventions by refusing to participate in the culture of reckless cash burn. This unwavering insistence on real-world profitability and ground-level problem solving has earned Garuda Aerospace the Champions of Chennai 2026 Award for Science.

In an ecosystem where modern founders are often encouraged to chase valuation over value, Jayaprakash has quietly built an enduring manufacturing and services company by remaining steadfast to his principles. Rather than following the well-trodden path, he has consistently forged his own - proving that sustainable innovation is built not on hype, but on discipline, purpose and execution.

The Physical Grind and the Law School Choice

Jayaprakash's journey to becoming a leader in deep technology was anchored in relentless discipline rather than classroom conformity. During his school days, his training schedule was a punishing eight-to-nine-hour daily physical grind: three to four hours of swimming before dawn, another three hours in the evening, and two additional hours devoted to yoga or gym work. Recovery occupied much of the remaining day, leaving him with barely two to three hours for academics.

This structural constraint forced him to learn differently. While his peers relied on long hours of study, he learnt to absorb concepts quickly, identify essentials and maximise every available minute. That ability to process information efficiently would later carry him through a Bachelor's degree in Business Law from Annamalai University, an MBA from Queens University of Charlotte and the prestigious Programme

for Leadership Development at Harvard Business School.

His decision to study law was itself an act of courage. Having earned admission to medical school through the highly competitive sports quota, he fulfilled what many would consider the ultimate dream. His mother had hoped he would become a doctor. Yet Jayaprakash knew that medicine's demanding schedule would make it impossible to pursue competitive swimming at the highest level.

Faced with choosing between a respected profession and the opportunity to represent India across the world, he chose the latter. A headline in The Times of India captured the defining moment: "Ace swimmer dumps MBBS course for his first love." Law offered him the flexibility to continue competing internationally while pursuing higher education - a decision that reflected a pattern that would define his life: choosing purpose over convention.

The Solitary Lane: Lessons from the Water

While elite universities refined his understanding of leadership and business, Jayaprakash credits the solitary swimming lane with teaching him the realities of resilience and accountability.

Swimming is perhaps one of the loneliest sports. Once the whistle blows, there are no teammates to carry you through, no substitutions and no excuses. Every race is a conversation between the athlete and the clock. Months of painstaking preparation can disappear in under a minute if one stroke falters.

That environment cultivated a mental toughness that no classroom could have provided. Jayaprakash openly acknowledges that he has experienced as many defeats as victories, but those disappointments became his greatest teachers. Every loss demanded reflection, adaptation

and the courage to return stronger. Those lessons would later become invaluable in entrepreneurship, where setbacks are inevitable and perseverance often determines success.

The transition from an individual athlete to the leader of a rapidly growing organisation required another transformation. "Building an organisation is like climbing Mount Everest - you cannot do it alone," he says. Recognising that success depended on collaboration rather than individual brilliance, he consciously learnt to replace the self-reliance of competitive sport with the empathy and trust required to lead teams spanning multiple generations.

In an era characterised by high employee attrition, evolving workplace expectations and the rise of the gig economy, Jayaprakash has relied heavily on mentorship. He deliberately surrounds himself with advisors twenty to thirty years his senior, believing that wisdom accumulated over decades often provides the perspective needed to navigate modern business challenges.

What distinguishes Jayaprakash is that he has never viewed technology as an end in itself. For him, innovation is meaningful only when it solves a problem that people experience every single day. That philosophy explains why Garuda Aerospace's story is not merely about drones taking to the skies; it is about farmers spending less on pesticides, rural youth discovering dignified livelihoods, and technology reaching villages that had long been left out of India's innovation narrative.

Disrupting Agriculture Through Physics-Informed AI

The leap from preparing deep-tech reports for the United Nations to founding Garuda Aerospace was sparked by a simple but powerful realisation: drones were being fundamentally misunderstood.



To most people they were either recreational gadgets or expensive defence equipment. Jayaprakash saw something entirely different. He saw supercomputers with wings.

By equipping lightweight unmanned aerial vehicles with advanced sensors, LiDAR systems and thermal imaging, Garuda began addressing some of the deepest structural challenges in Indian agriculture.

The company introduced what it calls physics-informed AI - a sophisticated convergence of robotics, environmental science and artificial intelligence. A single automated drone can spray between

fifteen and twenty acres in a day with remarkable precision, calculating the exact quantity of chemicals required based on local weather conditions, crop maturity and regional variables. Farmers not only reduce labour and costs but also minimise wastage while improving crop health.

Technology, however, was only half the solution.

Jayaprakash recognised early that asking a one-acre farmer to purchase a drone worth nearly ₹4 lakh made little economic sense. Instead of selling products directly

to small farmers, Garuda created an entirely new business model - a drone-as-a-service ecosystem.

The company supplies drones to rural entrepreneurs, many of whom had discontinued formal education after the eighth grade, and trains them to operate sophisticated systems using intuitive smartphone interfaces. By demonstrating the financial viability of this model to public sector banks, Garuda enabled these entrepreneurs to secure loans and establish profitable businesses capable of recovering their investment within fifteen to eighteen months.

In doing so, Garuda created something larger than a technology company. It built an ecosystem where innovation generates employment, empowers rural communities and democratizes access to cutting-edge technology. The drone became more than a machine; it became a vehicle for economic mobility.

Ultimately, Garuda Aerospace's remarkable rise is a direct validation of its defining philosophy—to find a way or make one whenever confronted with systemic barriers. While many startups relied on burning investor capital in pursuit of temporary user growth, Garuda chose the more demanding path of building a financially sustainable manufacturing and services ecosystem, judged by product performance, customer trust and long-term value.

That strategy has paid rich dividends. Today, the company commands an impressive revenue run rate for 2025–26 and holds nearly 25 per cent of India's active drone market, a testament to years of disciplined execution rather than short-term spectacle.

As Garuda Aerospace receives the Champions of Chennai 2026 Award for Science, the recognition extends far beyond technological excellence. It celebrates a vision that has consistently placed purpose before popularity, sustainability before spectacle and impact before valuation. Agnishwar Jayaprakash's journey is a powerful reminder that extraordinary achievements emerge when individuals possess the courage to question convention, the ability to withstand failure and the determination to build solutions where none exist. In a world searching for innovators capable of creating lasting change, Garuda Aerospace stands as compelling proof that the boldest journeys begin with a simple conviction: if there isn't a way, make one.