



CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON

Congratulations to *HT* on reaching this important milestone and taking up this important initiative.

Though I moved to MP just over a year ago, I was familiar with the state from before. Over the years, I had visited the majestic Stupa in Sanchi, the tigers at Kanha and Bandhavgarh, the intricately carved statues of Khajuraho, the impressive rock formations at Jabalpur, the crocodiles on the banks of Ken river in the Panna National Park and the forts of Gwalior. Much of this was as a tourist, and as you can see I have been a particularly big fan of the conservation efforts represented by the wildlife parks of MP.

My earlier impression of the state was of natural bounty combined with heritage architecture. But I didn't have a great impression of the other infrastructure, particularly the roads.

But, I can see that things have changed, certainly for the better. The roads connecting major cities and tourist attractions are now in good shape. Overall, power supply is good though there are still glitches at the local distribution level. Large water pipelines have been laid to bring Narmada water to the cities. Wandering around, I was happy to see the effort to build toilets in village homes.

Yet, challenges remain. Roads within towns and cities need improvement. Cleanliness and traffic management should be two priorities. Local lakes and water bodies need to be cleaned and then kept clean. Specifically, in the case of Indore, while it's good to see that afforestation and greening efforts have been led by the Indore Development Authority at various times, the green patches created often look neglected and garbage is strewn all over them. The community has to take greater responsibility for its

environment and needs to be involved in the upkeep of these green belts.

I have been a student and teacher of strategic management for over two decades. One characteristic that is apparent from Indian companies that have established themselves as global players is their speed. They are very quick at spotting opportunities and more importantly, executing strategies that address these opportunities. I can see that both our political leadership and bureaucracy are fast at responding to things but there is a need for equal speed in execution. To take just one example close to home – there is a railway overbridge-cum-flyover adjacent to IIM Indore that has been under construction for, I understand, close to five years.

Quality should be another priority. One of the core principles of quality management is 'do it right the first time'.

There is a road connecting Rau and CAT which is a major thoroughfare providing connectivity to the airport and city for institutions like IIM and industrial units in a part of the Pithampur industrial area. Yet, this road develops potholes every monsoon, takes at least a month to mend after the rainy season is over and doesn't provide a smooth surface after that.

But, at the same time, there are several bright spots. One aspect of Indore that has really impressed me is the quality of school education. I have had the opportunity to visit several schools. Shishukunj impresses with its serenity and quiet dignity; Daly College has hoary traditions and a wonderfully quaint campus in the middle of the hustle and bustle

of Indore city; Emerald Heights is building extensive new international connections; and Indore's Delhi Public School rates highly among all the DPS schools in the country. When I try to attract faculty to IIM Indore, one thing I can always confidently say is that their children have a wide variety of high quality school to choose from.

The city also has the benefit of a variety of people who are blazing new trails in different directions. Janak Palta McGilligan, our well-deserving Padma Shri awardee this year, opened new vistas for tribal women through the Barli Institute and at the same time reminds us of the importance of sustainability through her solar and wind-powered home on the outskirts of the city.

A former student of mine at IIM Bangalore, Deepak Goyal, grows some of the best pomegranates in the world using modern, sustainable agricultural practices on what would otherwise be considered barren land. With the blessings of seniors like Mahesh Sharma, Jagdish Verma and Shiv Singh Mehta, and the efforts of people like Shamit Dave and Vijay Goel, the Indore Management Association organises a world-class management conclave that for two days every year brings some of the best management thinkers to the city of Indore. Concerned citizens under the banner of organizations like the Abhyas Mandal focus attention on issues that the city needs to address through seminars and workshops. A strong network of social service clubs like the Rotary with active participation from both men and women portend well

for the future of our city.

In the past, Indore was known for the textile industry and for being the major trading and commercial centre of MP. Today, it's known for soya, potatoes and tasty food, though not necessarily in that order. We have a vibrant and attentive local media that both projects the city's achievements and points to its deficiencies.

Indore has many locational advantages. On the national map, we are centrally located and not far from two industrial powerhouse states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. Two of the holiest sites of Ujjain and Omkareshwar are not far away. India's most impressive and perennial river the Narmada is less than an hour's drive away. Mandu offers reminders of past military battles. We are well connected by air and road; only railway connections could be better. We are the only city with a functioning IIT and IIM. In the Raja Ramanna Centre for advanced technology, we also have a major centre for advanced research.

I have also had the good fortune to visit many of our local business schools. What has struck me is their enthusiasm and energy, particularly of the students.

There is a lot going for our city. But the question is how do we leverage it?

Over a decade ago, the government of Karnataka had set up the Bangalore Agenda Task Force to act as a coordinating body for the long-term vitality and development of the city. Today, Indore needs a similar initiative that can provide the vision and strategy for the future growth of Indore.

Political leaders from Indore occupy important positions at both the national and state levels. With their blessings and support, it's time to create a blueprint that can position Indore as one of the smartest cities for the future.



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