

The Tortoise Paradigm



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The nation is witnessing new winds of transformation impacting the entire India

THE WORLD has been waiting to see whether India will “make it”. The world has also been wishing India well in meeting its challenges from poverty to poor infrastructure, from lack of education and health to regional security. The list is unending and there many skeptics. The year 1991 brought a new paradigm of development with a central role for entrepreneurship and the private sector in economic activity. This process has evolved creating a new balance and, bringing with it sustainable 9% plus annual GDP growth. The nation now sees the new winds of transformation impacting the entire population of India, to include the rural people.

The high growth rate is key because it generates many positives. First, the level of resources is unprecedented enabling action on multiple issues. Second, jobs and self-employment on a scale hitherto never experienced. Third, income in the hands of people beyond all precedent. Fourth, consumption, savings and investment, all on a new high. Fifth, a real change in living standards and in aspirations. Sixth, a new impetus to providing education and health to all. Seventh, a huge momentum of infrastructure development.

So, sustained high growth has led to the term “India Rising” because there is visible change in the country, touching nearly every corner. At 7% growth, it was still incremental. At 9% plus it is transformational. For India and Bharat. Combined with this is technology. IT, TV, Telecom, to name just three areas, have touched the lives of hundreds of millions, giving new hope. People living in rural areas now have cell phones to communicate, TV to connect to the country and world and IT enables empowerment unimaginable ten years ago.

The impact of all of this has just begun. Especially, the use of technology to enable distance education and telemedicine, as well as e-governance. The “reach” and

impact will be truly nationwide. The Unique Identity Card project will also be transformational.

2010-2020 will really see Bharat, and the 600 million people in the rural areas, emerge into a new way of life. Thousands of new towns will develop as technology enables development where people are. The rush for migration to the big cities for jobs and related opportunities will fall. Socially, families can stay together instead of the man leaving the village and the family for work.

New challenges are already emerging as villages and small towns witness new growth, including the building of physical, social and technology infrastructure. It is happening slowly but steadily. The chaos of India in some sense will always be a part of life but democracy, free media, millions of young people with new aspirations- all of this are driving connectivity and growth.

The most important feature of all this is the unleashing of entrepreneurship. Not just the big corporates or the mid size but the micro- entrepreneurs, self- employed and providing jobs to others. The opportunity that the shift of the 90's gave is to create entrepreneurs out of disadvantaged people and many, today, are millionaires and employers.

This is a phenomenon impacting all of society.

Vast new opportunities

THE EARLIER limited options of government employment and/or corporate employment are matters of the past. Vast new opportunities have opened up across all sectors. Anyone with an idea or a skill can become an entrepreneur which gives a different kind of self-esteem, self-confidence and self- respect. And, families from farms to elsewhere are finding that the young want to do "their own thing" using new access to finance.

So, a "Rising India" is also a "Rising Bharat" and the change is happening, fuelled by technology which bypasses incremental development, enabling 600 million rural people to join the mainstream of the economy and society in a steady procession. The challenge is to speed the process and manage it more efficiently.

And, this is crucial because government — at the Central, State and local levels, have a major part to play to address the issues of administration, corruption, bureaucracy, judiciary, all of which delay the country moving to another paradigm change. In spite of the new economic environment, the "official" systems and procedures are still way behind- and that the crucial challenge to be met and overcome so that there is one India , one Bharat. Technology, again, can make the difference.