

## **Nagpur/Vidarbha, the ‘Tiger Capital of the World’. A Development Paradigm.**

### Introduction:

Nagpur in Vidarbha, colloquially referred to as the ‘Orange City’, is actually the ‘Tiger Capital of the World’. There is no other city anywhere with an International Airport, which has so many notified tiger parks and reserves in its close proximity. These include Tadoba Andhari, Pench Melghat, Nagzira, Navegaon, Bor, and others. It is actually possible to land in Nagpur, drive out 30, to 50, km, and have an encounter with a real wild Royal Bengal Tiger, in its natural environment.

This reality has immense implications for the well being and the development of the region which is perpetually plagued with the stigma of being an under developed part of the state.

After Oil-energy, Tourism is the largest industry in the world in US\$ revenue terms. And the fastest growing segment of this immense industry is Wild Life, and Adventure Tourism. India is a wild life superpower, and has the Natural Capital Assets to take a pole position in this industry, and Nagpur and Vidarbha can become a centerpiece of this edifice.

### Paradigms of Development:

No country or region bases its development strategies on building and making every thing. The Soviets tried it and failed. The pathetic state of the North Korean economy which claims self sufficiency in every thing is common knowledge. For the Swiss the primary engine of growth was banking, for Holland diamond

cutting and cut flowers, and even the Japanese initially built their economic clout on consumer electronics, and automobiles. The underlying lesson of this truism is that development strategies should be founded on the strengths and assets of a region.

For India an analogy from the Taj Mahal is germane. The Taj Mahal is an example of how Historical Capital, through effective management has been transformed into a performing Economic Asset. To elucidate:

If 3 million foreign guests visited the Taj Mahal last year, and each one had to pay INR, 1000/-, the Taj earned:

$3,000,000 * 1000 = 3,000,000,000$ . (i.e., INR 3 Bn), or INR 300 cr.

There are caveats to these numbers. They do not include domestic tourism which is very large in volume, and the earning capacity of the Taj has a multiplier impact for wealth creation and employment, on many other industries, including food and lodging, transport, souvenirs, security, etc.

It is also important to note that there are innumerable 'protected', monuments dying in the dust in India. But because the Taj is a performing economic asset it is protected, preserved, and perpetuated for posterity.

For Nagpur/ Vidarbha then the strategies for development, as subsequent analysis will show, should be based on the regions strengths. These are its substantial assets in wild life and bio diversity; and its potential for renewable energy with 300 days of sunshine in a year.

## Strategic Investments, and Interventions:

### 1. Wild Life & Adventure Tourism:

A comparison of the performance of the Kruger National Park in South Africa, and the Nagpur/ Vidarbha Tiger region will aid in understanding the logic of Strategic Investments and Interventions.

The Kruger National Park covers an area of 19,455 sq. km. It is home to a vast variety of fauna and flora, and is powerfully marketed, as indeed is the whole country of South Africa, throughout the world. The management plays host to and educates and entertains 400,000 visitors annually. Even ‘a back of the envelope calculation’ will show that if 400,000, guests spend an average of seven days, and spend US\$ 500/- per day, the park earns; US\$ 1.4 bn. for the country. The local population is fiercely protective of the park since they see it as a source of their livelihood. This is the real KEY, no conservation efforts will succeed if the local resident population does not see their livelihood benefited.

Nagpur/ Vidarbhas’ forested areas in contrast cover 37,251sq. Km, almost twice the area of the Kruger Park! The region is rich in wild fauna and flora. It is not marketed at all and the numbers of visitors are an infinitesimal proportion of its true potential. Even for those who do visit, it seems to be the intent of the management to make the experience as forgettable as possible. Brought up as they are in the ‘command and control’ culture left behind by the Raj, they are busy playing pliant hosts to VIPS, and political bosses instead of implementing a viable conservation strategy.

In fact at present the only elements that make any economic return from the wild regions of Nagpur/ Vidarbha, and I dare say the whole country, are poachers and smugglers, and the corrupt who

collude with them. The locals are unmindful of the economic potential of the regions Natural Capital, and do not feel that they have a stake in its preservation.

Given the above context the issues of the required strategic interventions and investments can be addressed.

- a) Taking a leaf out of Dr. Man Mohan Singh's book the parks should be made 'profit centers'. Instead of only conservation, and research which should remain an important focus, the leadership should be given the responsibility of generating economic returns from the parks as well. In doing this the parks will become performing assets like the Kruger Park and the Taj Mahal, and not Non Performing Assets (NPA's) as they are now. To achieve this successfully it may even be necessary to bring the wild life and adventure tourism segment within the authority of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) and take it away from the Ministry of Tourism.
- b) For (a) to be successful the education and training of the forest management would have to be redesigned. At present the management of economic assets is not a part of their intellectual equipment. They reflect Abraham Maslow's adage, that if the only solution you have is a hammer, you see every problem as a nail. So keep visitors out; patrol, and all will be well! Really?
- c) A powerful multi media marketing campaign should be implemented, promoting the Nagpur/ Vidarbha region both domestically and globally. If this is possible for Kerala, and Meghalaya, for Australia and South Africa, why not also for Nagpur/ Vidarbha, and other parts of Maharashtra?

On the supply side a range of initiatives and investments need to be made.

- a) Infrastructure of the right dimensions and quality needs to be created in terms of lodging, food, transport and communication, medical facilities, banking, and security etc.
- b) There is enormous employment generating potential in this industry. Wild life naturalists, guides and hospitality professionals will be required in their thousands to cater to this market. The educational challenge is to create a trained world class work force, which will match the the world class facilities invested in.
- c) There is also significant entrepreneur promoting potential, for vendors of souvenirs, tour operators, and the like, who can add value to the customers' total experience.
- d) In sum the Nagpur/Vidarbha wildlife experience, should work in the context of international benchmarks in terms of hygiene, safety, environmental health, pollution etc. The Nagpur/Vidarbha experience should compare with the best, whether it be Kruger in South Africa, or Yosemite in the USA.

## 2. Investments in Clean & Renewable Energy:

We had earlier noted that the other natural strength of the region (Nagpur/ Vidarbha) and an asset for development is the potential for the use of Renewable Energy.

Economic growth and development are survival issues, but how we power that growth, whether from 'clean' (renewable) or from 'dirty' (based on fossil fuels) energy, is also a survival issue.

The issue of global warming and climate change to facilitate understanding deserves a broader discussion. By now there is a 'deafening consensus', that the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas) for power produces unsustainable levels of carbon dioxide and methane which are heavy gasses. These gasses trap the sun's heat closer to the earth's surface, causing 'global warming'. Mother earth has started reacting to the fact that there is more carbon dioxide on the earth's surface now than there has been in the last 650 thousand years.

This has led to hurricanes of increased destructive fury, tsunamis of untold power, the melting of glaciers, and the polar areas, the desertification of vast riverine areas, and earthquakes. Is it progress if the economy grows but the earth becomes hostile and uninhabitable?

Nagpur/Vidarbha is historically poised to become a hub for renewable energy if the investments are made to start making a shift from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy.

What are the renewable energy technologies? and their practical applications? These include solar photovoltaic (PV) where sunlight including ultraviolet rays is directly converted into electricity, solar thermal (ST) where heat from the sun is carried through a medium usually a fluid to different points. Hydro power, biomass, wind energy, waste to energy, geo thermal, water harvesting, and other developing technologies.

It is not that there should be no thermal power which pollutes. The point being made is that where technology choices are available, the choices should be made wisely. The victims of linear thinking do not realize the wondrous transformation in the region that can be made with the use of renewable energy.

Renewable energy can generate sufficient power to light streets, and run schools, homes, and hospitals. Renewable energy power can operate TV sets, and computers. Solar pumps can be used to irrigate fields, and to pump drinking water, and solar refrigerators can be used to preserve medicines and vaccines in rural hospitals. Add to all of this the fact that renewable energy sources can provide power to rural telecommunication networks, and repeater stations. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong wants to make Singapore the first solar city in the world. Why not Nagpur in Vidarbha?

It should be emphasized that renewable energy is appropriately suited for the Nagpur/Vidarbha region. It provides power for economic growth and human activity, without harming the environment. These are low maintenance long serving technologies, which can be used in remote geographical settings. There is a practical working example of all these technologies in an organization in Wardha (Vidarbha), called the 'Center of Science for Villages', the website is: [www.csvtech.org](http://www.csvtech.org) . Led by Mr. Sameer Kurvey, visionary work is being done in the centre. It is about time prophets were known in their own country.

If a proper feasibility study for renewable energy, followed by a development strategy pursued by exemplary leadership, were to be Implemented for the region, it would create very substantial gains.

Hundreds perhaps thousands of crores of rupees could be earned by the region, and Nagpur/ Vidarbha could become a 'showcase', for a world facing the challenges of environment degradation and climate change.

### Earnings from investments in Wild Life & Adventure Tourism:

With the strategic inputs mentioned in this paper, we are now in a position to estimate the earnings for the region from wild life and adventure.

With aggressive marketing let us target 10% of the 6 million foreign visitors who came to India last year, i.e. a total of 6.0 lacs. Let us assume that a guest spends an average of five days in the wild and spends an average of US\$ 400/- per day. This includes everything, boarding, lodging, transport, safaris etc. Let us also assume that US\$ 1= INR 50/-

The revenues earned from the foreign visitors would be:

$$600,000 * 5 * 400 * 50 = \text{INR} 60 \text{ bn. Or } 6000 \text{ cr.}$$

The numbers are simply enormous, and it still does not take into account domestic tourism which could double the earnings. The numbers can be massaged in different ways, but the underlying reality is that if Vidarbha's assets are efficiently managed, the earnings potential is enormous.

We have been hearing that some lobbies wanted to destroy the beautiful forests of Tadoba Andhari with coal mining. When you are sitting on a gold mine why would you want to destroy it with a coal mine?!

Conclusion:

In conclusion the development of a country or a region should be founded on the strengths of the assets in its 'balance sheet'. In the case of the Nagpur/Vidarbha region the assets are the enormous promise of its wild life and bio diversity, and its potential for using solar and other forms of renewable energy.

It will however take leadership, for the potential of the region to fructify into reality. This leadership requires Vision, Courage, and the capacity for Risk and Sacrifice. In case after case whether it was Japan after the war, Singapore more recently, or nearer home Jamsetji Tata, and Narayan Murthy, all exemplified these virtues of Vision, Courage, and the capacity to take Risks, and make Sacrifices.

Successful leaders have built their strategies around their assets, and when these assets have led to growth they have created new assets as the launching pads for further progress. The house of Tata created their base in textiles in the Empress Mills in Nagpur. They moved on to steel in Jamshedpur, when few would have given them any chance

of succeeding. The story goes; it may be apocryphal, that the Britisher in charge of the region around the steel mill in Jamshedpur commented that if that Indian, Tata was able to make a pound of steel, he would eat it. He would have died of indigestion today. Nagpur/Vidarbha is waiting for inspirational leadership, to progress, develop, and keep its rendezvous with fate. It is time to 'Beguide the Beguide'.

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Nagpur: 26th. July 26, 2010