

The Land of Immense Potential

By

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Time to harness the potential

Tripura may be a small state in the republic of India, but one thorough gaze across the potential the state offers to the world in general, would lend credence to the fact that Tripura is second to none. If there would have been an index measuring human contribution towards global developments, vis-à-vis the hardships they face, I am sure Tripuraites would be right there at the top. No prizes for guessing the reason. Tripuraites being the synonym for flourishing in spite of hardships and infrastructural inadequacy, landlocked geography is born with a determination to perform against all odds. A small glimpse across

www.tripuratalents.com initiated by the dynamic Tripuraite, Prof. Subrata Bhattacharjee of the prestigious Michigan State University, where yours truly is a member as well, would provide the proverbial tip of the iceberg as far as talents of Tripura is concerned. Tripuraites are catering to the need of national and international organizations starting from Microsoft to NASA and UNICEF to World Bank. Then what is stopping this excellent state to reach its rightful place of crescendo amongst the comity of places which are known globally for some or the other reasons. Its time to introspect as blaming government for the state-of-affairs is nothing short of passing on the buck, rather than sharing the same. It's time which calls for public-private collaboration to make this state a sought after destination for investments in sectors like travel and tourism, handicrafts, and headhunting.

Sectors which can put Tripura on the global radar

If one sifts through the data so as to find out Tripuraites heading some or the other organization or contributing towards a major project in almost all the continents, I don't think there would be any country left where there won't be Tripuraites. If that is the case, then why are we not leveraging these real home grown brand ambassadors? I am sure with little bit of motivation, acknowledgement and support from the administrators of the state and center, things would start moving. If Kerala, a state having more or less same terrains, landscape beauties, leaving aside the sea faces, can claim to be God's own country then what is stopping us to call Tripura as the Globe's own country. That does not mean it is so simple though! We need to work tirelessly first to put our house in order, although most of things have already been taken care of in the last few years, notably the problem of terrorism. The aspects which needs to be attached more importance is to improve the infrastructure, like increasing the air connectivity, starting something on the lines of Deccan Queen, now that railways have penetrated the capital of the state. Tourist spots need to be given a facelift, reputed chains of hotels should be invited to set up hotels in the city center and motels on the state highways. The handicraft industry should be made a Strategic Business Unit with a part of the stake being sold to a global private player who can not only turn around the units but also make the brand a strong Unique Selling Proposition at the world level.

The state offers quality talents to national and international organizations both from the public and private sector which means the quality of education till the higher secondary level is quite strong, which in other words can be interpreted as very strong fundamentals on which sky scrappers can be erected. However, these sky line constructions would call for improving the toppings in the form of the tertiary education. Kudos is due to the present government (state) to raise the quality and quantity by increasing the number of engineering colleges, medical colleges, apart from roping a renowned private university of the country to groom the state

citizens. But it is not yielding the desired result as the brain drain is still continuing even now. A chunk of these graduates and post graduates after completing their education from the state, start to move out for greener pasture, leaving the resources spent on their education go down the drain as far as the state's own development from these professionals are concerned. For example if more than 60% of the graduates passing out from NIT, Tripura, TIT, Icfai University, Government Medical College, Tripura moves out of the state in search of opportunities, it does not benefit the state. It therefore calls for a meticulous planning on the part of the state administrators to germinate seeds of employment and entrepreneurship at the local level so that mass exodus is prevented. The development of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities can only happen if the state leverages the inherent advantages in sectors like travel and tourism, handicrafts, jute, tea, rubber plantations rather than making a new business model out of sectors which has to be set up from the scratch.

The roadmap

Whatever has been discussed in the first two paragraphs may sound idealistic; however, it would be great if we understand the viability of the proposals by conducting a cost benefit study along with a feasibility study. Roping in investors at the outset may be a difficult proposition, it is therefore important to have confidence building measures like promoting entrepreneurs at the local levels, growing and nurturing self help groups to manage cottage industries in an organized fashion, having a single window clearance for all proposals, rather than have red tapes to start off. Once the local players and industries starts to make the necessary noise, the national players would take notice and start approaching the government. If the second phase is successful, it can then be the roadmap for putting a red carpet to the international companies by providing benefits like tax holidays and other infrastructural advantages. This needs a solid homework before starting the national/global campaign with road shows and chain of international/national investor summits are kicked off. Even though challenges are manifold when one compares the inherent disadvantages of Tripura with those of other states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, it looks gigantic, not insurmountable. The other benefit could be the close proximity to Bangladesh, along with the daily bus service, can draw a sizeable international traffic from the neighbouring country to start the process.

Initiative like www.tripuratalents.com should be backed by the decision makers so that it turns into a mass movement resulting in more and more prospective employees and entrepreneurs get the much needed motivation and momentum to see the problems as opportunity, rather than cribbing with them. Schools and colleges should be monitored to include entrepreneurship as a full fledged subject, and all professional and vocational courses should be offered with an approach of making their complete population of students, employable, rather than mere degree holders. This would also call for revolutionizing the education sector at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. Simultaneously the infrastructural renovation and the brand building exercise may continue, both in the real and the virtual world. The state would get readymade resources in the form of Tripuraites settled in various parts of the globe to do that and that would save on cost, time and would make the state citizens settled abroad feel happy about their motherland. It is time when we need to stand on our own feet, by using our resources, rather than look out for someone who would create a miracle. It's a global slowdown now, and therefore it would be ideal to initiate the process now. After all the renowned corporations took birth when the industrial landscapes were in turmoil! It's now or never!

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