

Madhya Pradesh In 2020

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Madhya Pradesh is geographically very large, it is fortunate to have the Satpuda and Vindhya hill ranges, it is well watered by the Chambal, Narmada, Tapti, Mahi, Betwa and Son rivers just to name a few, its soil is fertile and its climate equable. The monsoon is adequate, it is India's largest forest state and there are minerals galore. The people are peaceful, hard working and especially amongst the tribals, full of joy with a zest for living. In arts, crafts, fabrics, in culture, in places of pilgrimage MP is richly endowed. It should be India's most developed state, whereas it is listed amongst the most backward. MP has a history of political stability. Why has it not exploded powerfully in its economy, like resource starved Gujarat has done?

Sometimes the very factors which make life easier are also the ones which lead to complacency. Why labour hard when one has enough to eat? That kills ambition and when there is no ambition there is indolence. Perhaps where there is hardship, as there was in the Punjab, people became hardy, they strive for excellence, they create huge irrigation works and they prosper. Perhaps MP needs stiffening with the can-do spirit of the Punjabis. Can 2020 bring us this spirit? Can it bring us the enterprise of the Gujaratis?

When Shivraj became CM and he still listened to some of us old fogeys. I suggested that as Vice Chairman of the State Planning Board he should select a person who is forward looking but wholly unorthodox in his planning approach. When Ram asked Hanuman to find out where Sita was being held captive he did not ask Ram for a boat to ferry him across to Sri Lanka. Instead he leapt across the sea and reached Lanka where he found Sita. We need a Hanuman who can leapfrog from intermediate stages of development and create a new paradigm which can propel us into the next century. But no Chief Minister has ever thought along these lines and the Planning Board is a dumping ground for failed politicians and unwanted officers.

Plan big is my mantra. We have strengths, especially our natural resources. Can we not identify and create the most advanced centres of research in geology, mineralogy, forestry, agriculture, horticulture and non conventional energy that can make MP a world leader? They should be of a quality which would attract the best brains in the world and we should pay global salaries to them. We can build on our IIT and IIM at Indore, School of Planning and Architecture, IIFM and IISER at Bhopal, ABV-IIITM at Gwalior to create a knowledge network in science, technology, information technology, urban planning and architecture and management which is of world class. The Agriculture University, Jabalpur the State Forest Research Institute and the Rajiv Gandhi Technological University at Bhopal can become models for state Universities of excellence in India. AIIMS Bhopal can pioneer both medial education and preventive and curative medicine. The potential is enormous, but it is latent. By 2020 we must awaken and unleash the sleeping gaint of education.

More even than the Punjab the agri-horticulture potential of MP is the best of all in India. We need a holistic approach to agriculture in which land, soil quality, water availability and use, the best cropping pattern, quality seed, scientifically and technologically appropriate agricultural practices, all based on research and its application, storage of the produce, its marketing, processing for value addition, delivery to the consumer, all designed for equitable spread out release into the market which stabilises seasonal and price fluctuations, must harmoniously be orchestrated to form the holistic plans. This must be a major target for 2020.

Infrastructure development, the provision of at least the minimum basic services to our settlements, generation of employment in rural areas by a programme of asset creation such as watershed management and gainful non agricultural, secondary sector based jobs must also be our 2020 goals. If growth is managed with equity, by 2020 we can put MP on the fast track of development.
