

## Goodbye America!

*“Hanave ninnaya gunavenu bannipenu  
Hanavilladavanobba henave sari kandya”*

(O money! How can I describe your qualities?

One without money is equivalent to a dead body!)

-Saint Vadiraja (1480- 1600 AD)

Things haven't changed much since the time of this great Haridasa- money still continues to make the world go round, it is still the biggest motivator for our actions.

India, the erstwhile land of spiritualism, where material possessions were considered only secondary, has, over the centuries, become prey to this 'money-making' phenomenon. For a long time now, Indians have been obsessed with anything 'foreign'- jobs, chocolates, clothes and jewellery. Even a few years ago, a 'foreign returned boy' commanded a premium in the marriage market. The people who were considered successful in my parents' generation were the ones who made their fortunes in the US, the Gulf, or Europe. And it wasn't just the money- it was the chance at a better quality of life, good schools for children and a secure future.

We have certainly come a long way since then. India is today a trillion dollar economy, and is rubbing shoulders with the superpowers of the world. Being a software engineer in India (Bangalore in particular) is the new path to a secure future. Just as one would see matrimonial ads in the paper saying 'non-Brahmins need not apply', today we see the same matrimonials advertising 'non-software need not apply'! Along with the software professionals, have arisen a new breed of super successful Indians- the MBAs. The wonderful thing about being part of either of these professions today is that a lot of the promising career opportunities are now in India, rather than in the West. Having recently been part of the placement process at IIMB, I can say with certainty that the entire world is looking towards India to find talent. And some of that talent is choosing to stay home, in India, in order to be part of the great success story of this country.

There are many reasons for this phenomenon. First of all, the world is today a globalized whole. One could be equally successful working for Microsoft in the US, or in India. The MNCs have established themselves all over the world, providing job opportunities irrespective of location. Secondly, the Indian firms are doing very well for themselves. It is not just companies like Infosys

or Wipro, but Indian companies in diverse domains such as Bharat Forge (a world leader in auto components), or Essel Propack (leading global packaging company) that provide exciting opportunities, enticing salaries and the prestige associated with being employed by a world leader. Next, India is a bustling entrepreneurial hub, and all my friends who dream of starting off ventures on their own have chosen to stay back here in order to develop the networks and contacts required to convert their vision to reality. So, really, today, even if one does consider money as the biggest motivator, staying in India is not that much of a compromise. In addition, we have excellent educational institutions- our secondary school curriculum is one of the best in the world, our IITs and IIMs are household names across the globe. Sure, the competition is tough, but one can't complain of lack of opportunity here.

My personal story is one that has to a large extent mirrored this changing Indian mindset. I started off as a teenager, like everybody else, wanting to see the world, and experience life abroad. I got this opportunity very early on and spent my pre-university years studying on a scholarship in Singapore. Two years in a competitive academic environment left me intellectually stimulated, but spiritually thirsting for India, the only place that I could pursue the Indian classical arts that I had grown to love. I returned coincidental with the great software boom, and saw opportunities flourish around me. I realized that continuing in India would give me the best of both worlds- Indian culture and global career opportunities. I have continued to face such decisions throughout my life. Turning down a lucrative offer to work with one of the premier investment banks in New York was a hard decision, but one that I did not hesitate to make.

I believe that ultimately, one has to do what makes one most happy. I am happiest when I am on the stage, singing for an audience; for a few minutes bringing joy and peace to the lives of people. The classical arts, especially music, have this innate ability to make people experience powerful emotion- it can make the listener ecstatic, it can move him to tears. I know this is what I was meant to do. In addition, I also get to pursue a mainstream career here. It may not be as monetarily rewarding as the job I gave up, but the joy I feel when people come to me after a successful concert and express their appreciation makes up for it many times over.

So, be it because of more opportunities becoming available here, or because of personal interests such as mine, it appears as though the mantra of this generation is "Goodbye America, Hello India!"

*-Manasi Prasad*

*26<sup>th</sup> July, 2007*