

'Infinity Is A High Aspiration Model For Entrepreneurs'

HIS a first generation entrepreneur. A passout of IIT Kharagpur and Harvard Business School, who believes that ordinary people can do extraordinary things. Meet **Bikram Dasgupta**, chairman and CEO of Glob-

syn Group of Companies. He is one of the first few professionals who kick-started the IT revolution in India. In a tête-à-tête with Tasmayee Laha Roy he unveils the future plans of technology and education tools.

After being to Harvard and IIT you could have easily settled for a comfortable life abroad but you chose to stay back, what led you to do so?

There is so much high in thinking and building an edifice, where you can influence young minds towards global growth of their careers, which I have been very fortunate of. I strongly believe, beginning 1996, I have been working on this single agenda for the youth, to think, plan, structure, develop, their lives for them to face the global challenges they will face tomorrow. I still have a long way to go and do much more of that.

BIKRAM DASGUPTA
CEO
Globsyn Group
of Companies

Tell us a little about your \$50 million export contract from Dell. How did it happen? What was the reaction back in Kolkata?

See I am a serial entrepreneur. In the 90s, we, five friends from IIT, started a company called PCL, to manufacture, assemble, market computer systems in India and provide IT solutions to corporates. This was the pre-software days. There was only Manufacturers' Association for Information Technology (Mait) and not so much of Nasscom.

Hardware business has always been tricky, as there is a strong effect of the import component. We used to work on very low margins, and cash flow was a major issue. We needed exports to balance import of components. That's how the process began.

I met Michael Dell, in 1991. He was 27 years old then. Dell jumped from \$800 million to \$2 billion that year. I gave him a quid pro quo deal. If he buys motherboard from us, I will sell his PCs in India.

PCL was known to be an aggressive hardware selling organisation. We set up our plant to manufacture motherboards, after we got the order. Can you believe that? I

had to beat Taiwan, where he was buying motherboards from. I came out with, what I called an Open book BOM. It suited both. It was a great deal. The then Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao, invited me for a cup of tea with him. It really felt good.

Why did you select Kolkata of all places for your dream venture that too in a place like Salt Lake ?

True. I believe in life that most of the things happen by accident. This was partly so. I had come to deliver a lecture in a seminar of the state government, called Gateway95 and talked about my Dell business, which was covered nationally. After the talk, the local government offered me to set up a software company in Kolkata on a floor of a building proposed for IT. I told them give me the building not the floor, I will build an intelligent work place in my home state. Rest is history. Infinity was born that day.

Infinity was your brain child, why did you think Salt Lake was ideal for an ambitious project like this? Infinity is my journey in life. It has got to do nothing with a building.

It is everything I stand for in life. 'Be the best. Do the best. Build the best'. It is a high aspiration model for an entrepreneur like me. It is still so. I was not thinking of Salt Lake, I was thinking of the youngsters in Kolkata and West Bengal and their life. They needed to see something which they can go after and aspire in life.

Infinity was the first milestone for that journey. It has continued and will do so in the future as well. The journey of Infinity will never end for me.

You had ideas and implemented them as well. How did the funding happen? Was there a finance problem ever?

Of course finance was and is still a big issue. It has always been so for me. But I have been lucky, may be, because the single most governing principal in my life has been performance. Bankers, investors and customers, love performers, they love tangible performers. Performing needs undivided focus. As I kept on travelling, finance kept coming my way and my priority was to deliver my promise to society, even if it meant, partially selling my equity. I have done that.

That is why you see Globsyn projects and brands in Kolkata.

While some bankers had given me loans easily some had also turned down my application. I have seen the ups and downs but focus has helped me perform.

What was the investment you put in for Globsyn?

In business you need to have access to money to build wealth. Making money is a lot easier than creating wealth. I have always focused on the latter. Globsyn has put in investments to the tune of over ₹500 crore in the last 15 years including the projects we have done, from investors, bankers and customers. We are only a custodian of the same.

Our business model is more horizontal than vertical. That is why we have been able to keep adding value to the society through technology, education, skills development and infrastructure. In all our knowledge businesses, we are now a significant player and would invest more on innovation, research and technology in the coming years.

How satisfied are you as an entrepreneur operating in Salt