

Click Guest Writer

Between Narayana & Obaro

- Segun Aregbeyen

Head, Infotech Desk of The Comet newspapers



This piece by Aregbeyen was published by The Comet newspaper on Monday, December 16, 2002 shortly after the launch of HumanManager 4.0. We think it is quite instructive and decided to reproduce it in this edition to give our numerous readers who may have missed it an opportunity to read it. Have a nice read. Editor.

Chairman N.R. Narayana Murthy is a known man. He has severally occupied conspicuous publications including the likes of Fortune, Newsweek, and Time, among a horde of other media in Europe and the U.S. He has delighted the screens of giant electronic media such as the CNN and BBC. He will continue to hit the headlines as long as good fortune continues to smile on Infosys, the company whose affairs he controls as chairman.

The western media is not gloating over the personality of Narayana out of sheer love. They probably would have loved to revile the man or simply turn their attention elsewhere.

But this Indian cannot just be ignored. He sits over the worlds second biggest software company with a market capitalization of \$5 billion (about N625 billion) and earned revenue of \$645 million (about N95 billion) in the current fiscal year (2002).

Now, that is way ahead what most sub-Saharan countries in Africa earn in a continent ravaged by poverty and war. Put Narayana's market capitalization of N625 billion and average yearly revenue of N95 billion beside the about N450 billion earned yearly from oil by Nigeria, you get an uncomfortable picture of the state of affairs in the so-called continent of Africa.



Narayana



Obaro

And Narayana's Infosys is just one company out of several others bringing a harvest of dollars for India every year. The purse of India is over flowing with American dollars from the enterprises of her children. That is why the western media cannot afford to ignore India.

In this nation of over a billion people exist companies that are re-defining the global economy, companies that are challenging the might of Europe and US giant business organizations and helping to tilt the balance of global finance from the near 'sovereign hold' of western capitalists.

Infosys was founded in 1981 near Bombay with only \$250 (about N250 then) by its techno-entrepreneur, Narayana. But today with over 11,000 workers it shares the limelight with American Microsoft and has a CEO that is no pushover beside Microsoft's Bill Gates.

Just as it has been able to penetrate the west with its flagship solution, Finacle, Infosys has been able to make

successful, headway within Nigeria's financial sector and may be the prime IT solution among Nigerian banks in the near future.

Its list of growing clients already includes First Bank plc, First Atlantic bank, Standard Trust Bank and there are clear signs that it would win more clients next year.

Infosys success streaks across the globe and specifically in Nigeria continuously brings to bear the viability of having indigenous techno-entrepreneurs that will equally make pages of Fortune magazine and CNN not for the

worst news.

Those questions were only last week at the formal launch of **HumanManager 4.0** forcefully echoed by no less a person than John Obaro of SystemSpecs whose company owns the patent for the Nigerian software. Obaro and his team had eight years ago started work on **HumanManager** to provide comprehensive solutions for payroll, human resources, pension fund management and end the 'ghost workers' syndrome.

In its eight years run to its fourth version, **HumanManager** has proven to be a success with over 150 high profile clients. But Obaro is not a known figure. He may have made inside cover of some national dailies and probably had some TV appearances. But he does not earn billions of dollars from software export. He has not made the cover of Newsweek, neither has he had a single appearance on CNN and may never make Fortune magazine. Obaro is gifted and runs a firm of highly talented people like other firms that include the likes of Progeny and Soft Solutions. But Obaro is not known.

He is not an Indian. His potential to generate megabillions from software export may never go beyond being latent-completely unrealized.

He is a techno-entrepreneur like the Indian Narayana but not so lucky because he is no Indian to enjoy the benefits of a Bangalore, some sort of Silicon Valley created by the Indian government to provide right conditions for Software companies.

Obaro does not enjoy active government support under a clear cut national agenda to promote IT. He has no access to a fund pool to take his entrepreneurial skills to heights undefined. He works in an environment that could stifle him out of business as readily as the environment would take pleasure in honouring no-gooders with national awards.

For these reasons and if things remain unchanged, the likes of Obaro would continue to celebrate million naira local deals when the world beckons on them to be part of the billion-dollar global software industry. What satisfaction is there from naira deals in an economy where N136 translates to only a dollar particularly among firms with boundless talents that exceed the average mark among other good players?

The way forward is simple and is already a hackney