

Branding Incredible India



It takes passion and perseverance to achieve monumental tasks. Branding India, giving it an appealing, common face worldwide, even while keeping its soul intact must have been a mind-bender. But **AMITABH KANT** achieved it. He is incredible, says **FARZANA BEHRAM CONTRACTOR**

F *Branding India* is so well written, so meticulous in its approach; it is not difficult to understand how Amitabh Kant succeeded in branding India, our incredible country and taking it to dizzying heights in world tourism. Here now is the author who is also the brain behind the amazingly successful campaign, *Incredible India*, giving us an insight into the blood, sweat and tears that went into giving India an identity, while keeping all its traits and values intact.

Were it not for this book, most of us would have taken for granted the reasons why Indian tourism took a positive turn, circa 2002 - 2003. Just as we do our country!

Granted that India is great. But someone had to put it on the world map. That someone was Amitabh Kant. Very generously, he acknowledges many colleagues without whose help, he says, the massive endeavour would never have been possible. However, we know it takes one special person to head a project, dream the impossible, and make things happen.

Though the *Incredible India* campaign had some brilliant advertisements, it was more than mere advertising. It went way beyond. The brand building process comprised personal relationships with international tour operators and journalists, partnerships, promotions, contests, use of interactive media and an aggressive communication strategy. The process blended strong elements of Indian culture while promoting and marketing India. For example at *ITB Berlin*,

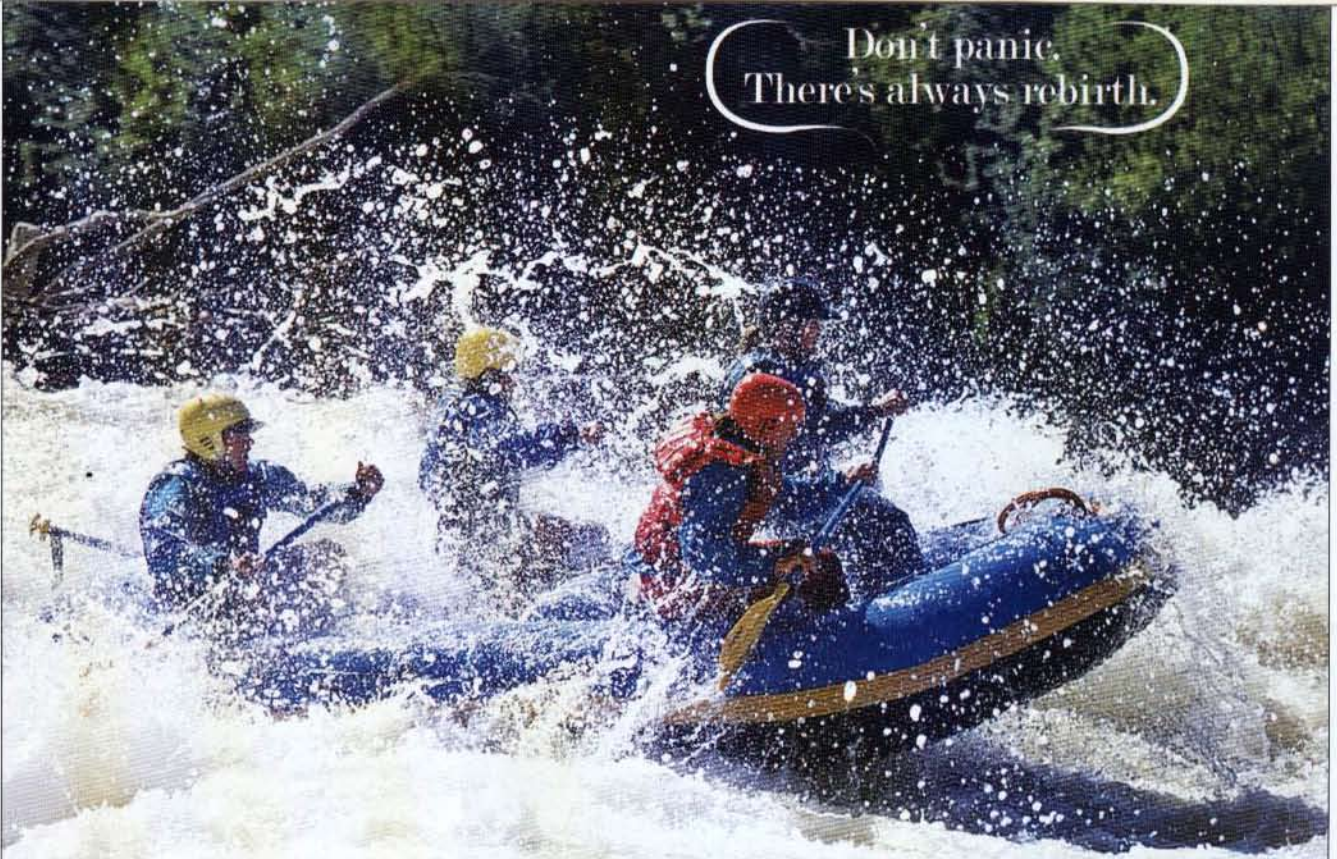
Shivamani, a genius of a percussionist was given a standing ovation. At the *World Travel Market (WTM)* in London, it was Vikku Vinayak Ram and his group of eight traditional instrumentalists who left the entire hall spellbound. The magic of Indian classical dancers was unveiled at the Lincoln Auditorium in New York

during *Incredible India @ 60*. The bold and powerful colours of India were on full display on taxis in London, trains in Amsterdam and tourist buses in Berlin, giving potential tourists a glimpse of the vast cultural and scenic treasures of India.

Amitabh and Co. went from being



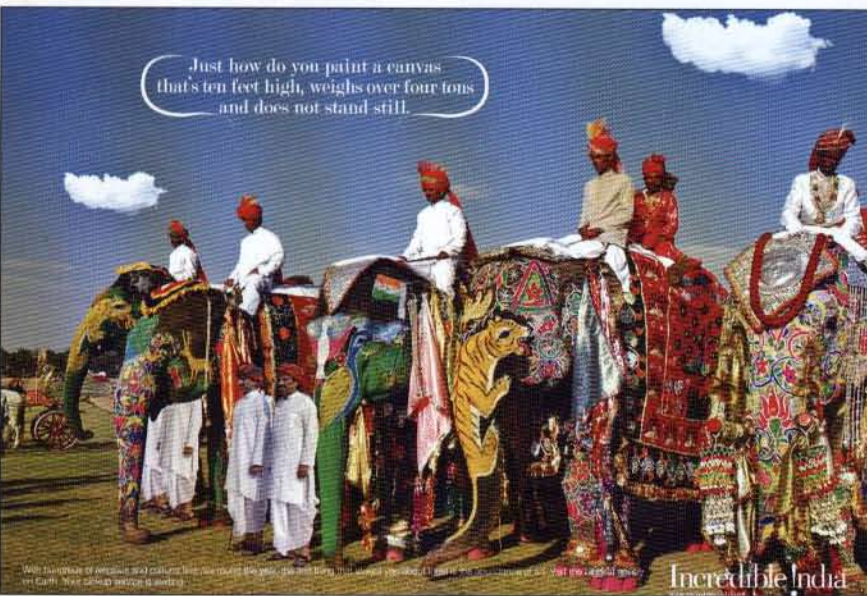
Don't panic.
There's always rebirth.



With some of the world's highest mountains, fastest rapids and a long coastline, India sets adrenaline rushing. Game?

Incredible India
www.incredibleindia.org

Just how do you paint a canvas
that's ten feet high, weighs over four tons
and does not stand still.



With hundreds of religions and cultures, India must be unified and bring multiple perspectives of its people and its diversity of life. It is the challenge of the Incredible India campaign.

Incredible India
www.incredibleindia.org

government officials to brand managers orchestrating the future progress of the brand, motivating the private players, outmanoeuvring competition and constantly trying to ensure that the tourist in India got the best possible experience. Soon *Incredible India* was on par with other very creative, catchy and meaningful international campaigns such as *Malaysia - Truly Asia*, *Uniquely Singapore*, *Amazing Thailand* and *100% Pure New Zealand*.

"Yes," says the author, "*Branding India* is a story of how the largest democracy in the world, with 28 states, seven union territories, 18 official languages and 1.2 billion people spread across 3.29 million square kilometres of breathtaking geography and history, was brought together under the realm of tourism by a simple brand building exercise that unified this magnificent diversity. But I discovered in no time that the dynamics and scale of this challenge were frightening. The biggest challenge was the task of holding the entire canvas together with one powerful idea that would help achieve the vision of unifying India as an aspirational destination. It took us almost a year of research, debates, discussions, public contests, focus groups and what ➤



Not all Indians are polite,
hospitable and vegetarian.



The Royal Bengal Tiger is the undisputed king of wild India. The tiger apart, you can observe over 1,200 types of birds and more than 272 animal species at India's 84 national parks and 447 wildlife sanctuaries. Scared?

Incredible India

www.incredibleindia.org

not before the idea of *Incredible India* came about."

To say the task was enormous would be an understatement. But Amitabh had experience. He was also responsible for putting Kerala on the world stage through the spiritually very appealing campaign, *God's Own Country*. The details of how and why it worked are all in the book and worth reading. Suffice it is to say this green state was truly worth promoting. Its simplicity and tranquility is astounding. Like Amitabh says, "Its soothing green envelopes you. Kerala's luxuriant landscape is undiluted nature, and its magic lies in the fact that almost the entire state is a tourist destination, with the life of the people very much a part of its allure. The people of Kerala have always fascinated me. Almost always clad in shades of white, to me they represent a pristine land." *Onam* festival with its boat race is to Amitabh, "a ballet, a symphony; the sheer energy of the races never fails to surprise me."

Branding India is a must for the library of every tour operator, advertising guru, marketing wiz-kid, politician; in fact anyone who loves India and is truly proud to be an Indian.

Branding India – An Incredible Story
Published by Collins Business
Price Rs. 499



Career Graph Of Amitabh Kant

- **Dec. 2002 – Feb. 2005:** Chairman & Managing Director, India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)
- **July 2001 – June 2007:** Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India
- **Sept. 1997 – July 2001:** Secretary, Tourism, Govt of Kerala & Chairman, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC)
- **July 1995 – Aug. 1998:** Managing Director, Govt of Kerala, Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC)
- **June 1992 – July 1995:** District Collector – Calicut, Kozhikode & Managing Director, Malabar International Airport Development Society (MIADS)
- **Sept. 1991 – Oct. 1992:** Commissioner, Rural Development, Govt of Kerala
- **June 1987 – June 1991:** Director & Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Govt of India
- **Sept. 1984 – June 1987:** Managing Director, Fisheries Federation (MATSYAFED), Govt of Kerala