India Rising? the Academic Challenge to Democracy

Dix D E
Professor, Department of Health Science, University of Hartford, West Hartford, CT 06117, U.S.A.

ABSTRACT

To clarify the uniquely Indian problem of 800 million poor citizens (67% of India’s population) in order to highlight the potential democratic solution and its worldwide implications.

Materials and Method: Data from the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Programme were used to divide 144 nations into 87 normal and 57 abnormal nations. Of the abnormal nations, 39 were both poor and sick by objective criteria. These 39 nations were ranked according to need for enhanced health expenditure, and the major correlates of this need were identified.

Result: By wide margin, India leads the world in number of people in poverty and need for enhanced health expenditure. Among poor, sick nations, both need and number of people in poverty correlate strongly and positively ($r > .96$) with the number of universities.

Conclusion: Among poor, sick nations, universities have been diverting resources from the people in need. India is ideally poised to break this tradition and demonstrate the power of academic commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Keywords: Democracy, Technology, Poverty, Development

INTRODUCTION

India ranks among the world’s fastest growing economies and is commonly portrayed as the world’s largest democracy. It is a world leader in aerospace and plans soon to send a probe to Mars and astronauts to the moon. Yet the majority of India’s citizens live in multidimensional poverty. Democracy, defined as rule by the majority, would divert funds from aerospace to human development. How will India’s leadership respond to this challenge? Will it ignore the majority in order to lead the world into space? Or will it abandon space to lead the world to human development? That answer will manifest not only India’s destiny, but the world’s. Will it be technology or democracy?

National Research Professor, Raghunath Mashelkar advocates for “Indian solutions to the specifically Indian problems of 800 million resource-poor people.” It is the purpose of this paper to clarify the nature of these “specifically Indian problems” in order to highlight their “Indian solutions” and worldwide implications. By abandoning space technology in order to mobilize resources for human development, India could model the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and, in this way, catalyze worldwide commitment to achieving these Goals. To a large extent, therefore, the destiny of our world depends on which giant India choose to become, the technological or the humanitarian.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The World Health Organization reported adequate health and wealth statistics for 144 nations. I divided these nations objectively into two groups, healthy and sick, and into two different groups, rich and poor. I employed a method that is useful for distinguishing normal from abnormal clinical laboratory tests. For some such tests, it is possible to distinguish patients from normal subjects by plotting the clinical test results vs their percentile rank in the population. I simplified and quantified this method and demonstrated its utility in distinguishing normal from abnormal clinical test values. It was found to be equally useful in distinguishing normal from abnormal nations.

Values for maternal mortality ratio (MMR) were calculated at each whole percentile for the 144 nations.