

India @ 73 – Musings of an Ordinary Indian

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[I was born in Lucknow, U.P.](#); three years after independence and so smelled the early fragrance of independent India.

My father [went to jail for 2.5 years during the independence struggle](#) and I am sure his fierce patriotism and sacrifices for India came into my DNA also. My father Jagdish Rajvanshi was doing his Ph.D. in Hindi literature in Allahabad University in 1940 when Gandhiji's call stirred him, just like it did for lakhs of other students, and he joined the freedom struggle movement and was jailed for 2.5 years. In doing so he left a very lucrative career of a possible University professorship.

He was an idealist and somehow could not get into mainstream of politics which very rapidly degenerated, after independence, into producing corrupt politicians who were more interested in amassing wealth rather than governing and this process became a norm. So an honest politician was called weak whereas a wheeler-dealer was called a “dynamic” leader.

Very briefly in 1975 he [became a minister in Shri. H. N. Bahuguna's U.P. cabinet](#) and was entitled to a car and bungalow but never left his Lal Bagh flat and would walk to Assembly (it was within walking distance) from our flat since he did not want to loose his habit of walking.

I think as India achieves the milestone of being 73 years old in next couple of days, we should reflect on these things on how from the heights of Gandhi-Nehru era of idealistic leaders we have come to the present sorry state where leaders are behaving like dictators, trying to create a rift in the

society, breaking it along religious lines and where building the temple becomes the most important event for the country.

My own journey from [Lucknow schools to IIT Kanpur then to US and back to rural India](#) reflects aspirations of an ordinary but proud Indian and in some ways mirrors my father's journey.

After [my Ph.D. and teaching in U.S. for a couple of years](#) I came back to rural India in 1981 partly because of idealism and partly because of arrogance. At that time when very large number of bright students of India were going to U.S. I chose to come back to rural India. I felt that my knowledge of solar energy will help India and that I will change India. India is an ancient civilization and has a tremendous inertial mass for change and yet I was foolish enough to think that I will change it.

India did not change but it changed me. Working and living in rural India taught me humility and spirituality. Humility in the sense that I realized there are millions of problems in this ancient land which have to be tackled and it will take generations and also more than few life times of struggle to change them.

Living in rural India also [helped me simplify my life](#). With hardly any avenues to spend money and availability of very few amenities, one starts living a simple life, which is the first step towards spirituality. Initially one may not like it but with time one starts to enjoy the benefits of a simplified life. I recommend such a life for anybody who believes in sustainability because when everyone becomes sustainable in their personal life, the world will automatically become sustainable. This together with [my spiritual leanings and readings during early 1960s](#) helped me on the path of spirituality.

Spirituality is the basic soul of India. [**Spirituality is not religion.**](#) It is the state of mind that makes it understand that the Truth is beyond the barriers of worldliness, religion, caste, creed, race or geographical boundaries.

This is what our great ancient philosophical thought of *Yoga, Upanishads*, etc. has taught us and we seemed to have forgotten it and have gotten entangled in the ritualistic things like temple making and other similar acts.

Just like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism were born because the leaders of these religions revolted against the ritualistic traditions of the ageing and decaying Hinduism, similarly I feel there is hope that a thought based on India's spirituality together with modern high technology will form a new paradigm of development for India and the world.

In my work in rural India I have touched on both these themes of spirituality and high technology and believe that Spirituality + Technology will bring us happiness and allow us to live a sustainable lifestyle. This is the theme I have explored in greater detail in my new book [**Spirituality + Technology = Happiness.**](#)

Spirituality gives us wisdom to reduce our needs and greed; and high technology allows us to fulfill these reduced needs very efficiently. This combination can lead us to sustainability and create a wholesome and emotionally satisfying world.

The journey to this line of thinking started when at the age thirteen, I was given a birthday gift – a book [**“Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi”**](#) (in Hindi). Reading this book changed my life and thinking. That book [**propelled me on the path of spirituality**](#) and with my training in engineering in IIT Kanpur and later in US, showed me how technology is very necessary to live a sustainable life.

And so when I came back from U.S. in 1981 to rural India I felt that India was on the cusp of a new development model and in late 1980s and early 1990s hopes were high that India had broken its shackles of old thinking and was on a path of general economic recovery. Yet it also brought tremendous corruption and decay in the polity of the country.

Since then there has been economic progress (increasing GDP) but the general ethics and morality of population and standards of political life have gone downhill and with ever increasing threat to democratic values.

Yet I feel there is hope. A country that has produced great leaders like Buddha, Ashoka, Adi Shankaracharya, Guru Nanak, Gandhi, etc. cannot be that bad. The genetic material of Indians is still the same. I feel the present set-up is an aberration and feel it shall pass. However what is sad is that younger generation which is the future of the country, has stopped the discourse on and engagement with the story of India. They seem to be too preoccupied with their social media and activities related to it. **Social media has somehow become today's opium of the masses.**

So as we approach India @73 it is the duty of older generation like ours and who are attached to the story of India to engage the youngsters in India's development through spirituality and technology. How do we teach our children and make them excited about a great India which will have a different model of development based on our ancient philosophical thought; is a great challenge. Yet if we overcome this challenge then India can show a new path of development for itself and for the world.

[HOME](#)

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