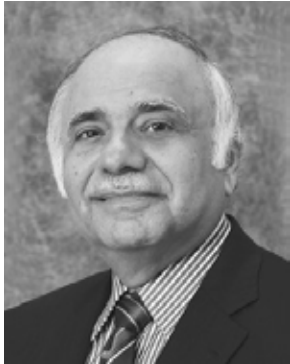


Modi's method: 'Love all, serve all'

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Even in the severe situation posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, India has proved that the country is resilient, contrary to many negative predictions.

In numbers alone, India's achievement in the effort to control the pandemic is overwhelming.

More than 960 million people have been vaccinated against the virus across 327,000 centers serviced by more than a million health workers. More than 64% of its nearly 1.4 billion people have received two doses through nearly 14 million vaccination sessions, 73% of them in rural and hard-to-reach areas. India has administered more than 1.53 billion doses, more than the combined total achieved by the United States, Brazil, Indonesia and Japan; only China has higher numbers (according to data available as of March). The speed of administering those doses has been impressive — from 100 million to 1 billion from April to November 2021

— an average of 3.75 million doses daily (United Nations Development Program, April 2022). A key factor in India's success is Cowin, a digital platform initiated by the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is a cloud-based system that facilitates registration, immunizations and appointments while issuing digital vaccine certificates. The COVID-19 pandemic has also reaffirmed the importance of India's health-sector infrastructure.

In 2014, India had 387 medical colleges. In the past seven years, this number has gone up to 596, for an increase of 54%. In the same year, there were around 82,000 undergraduate and postgraduate medical seats. This number has since jumped to around 148,000 seats, an increase of about 80%. In 2014 again, there were only seven All India Institutes of Medical Sciences in the country. Now the number of AIIMS approved stands at 22. At the same time, Modi has implemented various reforms to make medical education more transparent. Regulations for setting up medical colleges and hospitals have been liberalized.

In the coming years, India is envisioned as being the go-to destination for affordable high-quality medical care. India has many assets and resources needed to become a global medical hub.

Today, the world has also taken note of Indian practices that further enhance wellness, including yoga, ayurveda and meditation.

The problem of India's doctor shortage is well-known, but there hadn't been enough efforts to address this problem.

I would say Modi has had such excellent courage in leading India into better shape in this battle also, based on his firm faith in the Indian philosophy of Sanatana Dharma. History shows that fighting against vested interests and toward transformation has often brought on tragedies — like those that befell the Kennedy brothers and Mahatma Gandhi, to name a few.

"Perhaps vested interests also did not let previous governments take the right decisions. And, access to medical education remained an issue. Ever since we have taken office, our government has worked to address this gap," Modi said in January.

Along with the medical field, many varied reforms were brought in, and India is leading the world in the field of technological advancement. In just the past four years, the number of Unified Payments Interface transactions has grown by over 70 times. Rupees 110 Lakh crore (about \$135 billion) are being spent on a National Infrastructure Pipeline. India is also actively work-

ing to ensure every village has high-speed internet connectivity.

Why does Modi have such unwavering faith in his mission? I am convinced that is because he has a deep understanding of the ancient Indian philosophy of Sanatana Dharma, with strong faith in the teachings of the Indian saints, such as Swami Vivekananda and Sathya Sai Baba.

Sai Baba repeatedly emphasized the axiom of “Love all, serve all” through affordable and yet excellent medical service, especially for the underprivileged.

Recalling Vivekananda’s iconic 1893 speech at the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago, which beautifully demonstrated the salience of Indian culture, Modi said in January: “The spirit of his speech has the potential to create a more just, prosperous, and inclusive planet.

“He was a life devoted to national regeneration. He has motivated many youngsters to work towards nation-building. Let us keep working together to fulfill the dreams he had for our nation.”

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Since then India and Japan have created a strong and resilient mutually complementary relationship of culture, economics and politics with each other.

“Okakura Tenshin is the symbol of Asianism. In his book, ‘Ideals of the East,’ the very first sentence, this is one important thing I want to tell you. The very first sentence is ‘Asia is one.’ Okakura invited Swami Vivekananda to Japan and also sent him a check of 300 rupees. He came to Calcutta and met Swami Vivekananda on first February 1902 and both went to Bodh Gaya together,” Modi said in 2015.

Established in 1921, the Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan serves as an apex body for friendship, goodwill, economic and cultural exchanges and mutual understanding between India and Japan.

With profound gratitude to The Japan Times and its readers, I offer my hearty welcome to Modi and the members of his delegation to Japan.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.