

Ancient philosophy can help future of post-pandemic life

RYUKO HIRA

CHAIRMAN, THE INDIAN COMMERCE
AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION JAPAN



2020 started and ended with the coronavirus pandemic, forcing humanity to confront questions on how our lives have been impacted environmentally and socioeconomically.

It has affected every aspect of global life, from individual relationships to institutional operations and international collaborations. There is now a need for collective action, to rebuild society more holistically. A portal of opportunity is now opening that will allow us to grasp a bright new future.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Self-reliant India" policy hints at a potential solution. In essence, the key to ultimate wealth and prosperity lies within us, not outside in the temporal world, as the ancient Indian Vedic philosophy of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Righteousness) shows. If we don't even know ourselves, how then, can we find solace in life?

Prime Minister Modi said, "As we went through the centuries, there was innova-

tion, but ... at the heart of this was ethics and human values. ... Technology can contribute in a big way if it is also combined with values."

The isolatory effect of the pandemic has been to accelerate the pace of transformation in digital technologies, so it is indeed pertinent that Modi launched his "Technology-driven Systems" initiative as part of the "Self-reliant India" policy in May.

"The Japan-India Digital Partnership" of 2018 is based on shared values. It promotes development in information technology human resources, artificial intelligence and the next generation of digital evolution. The inherent religious beliefs of both our countries are based on values of wholeness and oneness with nature. We can build sustainable, resilient and harmonious societies and thus overcome this pandemic-stricken world — without exploiting others.

This February the Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan is celebrating its 100th anniversary. It serves as an apex body providing support, guidance and advisory services to those interested in developing economic and investment potential between India and Japan.

While felicitating India's independence and freedom, on behalf of ICIJ members, I convey deep appreciation to all who have contributed to India's cause and to the readers of The Japan Times.