Q. How do you view the Indian higher education system, especially the university system?
A. I think an argument can be made that there are serious problems with our higher education system. The major issue to my mind is that there aren’t enough young people from top of the class going into higher education as teachers, researchers, artists, thinkers, poets, journalists and writers. Second, a very large part of higher education has become professional-oriented. Don’t mistake me because I am an engineer, and I teach management. But professional education for all its value is to education what dessert is to a healthy diet. But higher education of a society, a country of size 1.2 billion cannot consist of management, engineering schools only. You need the plain stuff, Mathematics, Physics, History, Literature, Music, Geography, Psychology, Economics and Politics.

Q. Which is the teaching or engineering college? The guy who graduated just a year before and couldn’t find a job anywhere. What do you think the students would learn. Infosys said less than 2% applications get are employable. FICCI and World Bank say that two-third graduates are not employable.

Q. What is the way forward?
A. No outsider like me can actually devise a reasonable way forward. So my part of the answer is, it looks like a problem, but the solution has to be developed here. Having said that, I grew up in India and did a major portion of studies in India. I think I owe something to the nation.

First, I would say, attract more people from top of the class for teaching and into universities. Right now, with some exceptions, teaching has become a profession of last resort. Very few people choose to become Prof. We will have to attract more people to some universities and colleges.

Q. Do you think we have a hundred colleges. 30,000 dollars.
A. That doesn’t mean India should be like the US. I see people doing Bachelor’s at Yale in Art History and being hired by Goldman Sachs at 300,000 dollars. You can always take a high school kid and teach him things for which a company like Infosys hire ITIians. But an ITIian is thinking that he can do something great, something innovative.

Q. At an institutional level do you see that hunger to be world class?
A. It is not that our universities don’t have very smart students. But number of people who are very smart and are into teaching or research is very less. How many people from top 1% of any class say that I want to be a professor? The raw talent that is available is not appropriately moulded in Indian universities.

Who is teaching in our engineering colleges? The guy who graduated just a year before and couldn’t find a job anywhere. What do you think the students would learn? Infosys said less than 2% applications get are employable. FICCI and World Bank say that two-third graduates are not employable.

Q. What is the quality of education we are giving? How many people from top 1% of any class say that I want to be a professor? The raw talent is not appropriately moulded in Indian universities.

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