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## Self-Reliance is the best strategy for development

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*Vinod Diwan*

### Introduction

My association with R. D. Gardi Medical College is long. I was a classmate of Dr V. k. Mahadik from 1967 to 1971 as we graduated with MBBS. Later for different reasons I traveled to Zambia and worked for the Government of Zambia Ministry of Health at two districts, Mporokoso and Luwingu, both in the northern province. However, contact with Dr Mahadik was continuous. On my completion of contract in Zambia and on my way to the Bahamas, I visited Ujjain. With other friends, we had discussions about developing a healthcare institution in the form of a hospital. We wanted a cooperative hospital and even contributed funds to this end. However, politicians and individuals advised us to create a charitable trust and a hospital. There are many steps, hard work, and diplomacy, mostly by Dr Mahadik to achieve what is a medical college and other hospitals associated with this. Only a person with imagination, persistence, technical knowledge and patience knows how this could be achieved. In my view, Dr Mahadik has all these qualities. Today, RD Gardi Medical College and associated hospitals is a centre for education, research in medicine, and perhaps the largest single employer in the Ujjain district. While healthcare and education are important, RD Medical College contributes to the socio-economic development of local society. My contribution to this institution's development has been little and more as a moral and ethical guide or mentor. The collaboration between RD Medical College and Swedish Institutions (Karolinska Institutet, Nordic School of Public Health and others) has been long and enriching to collaborating partners. The aim from the start of this project was

self-reliance and using own resources as effectively and efficiently as possible. Dr Mahadik has achieved this. Self-reliance is a development ideology and strategy to be vocal for local expertise but still open to listen to others both within and outside the country. The success of this project is based on these principles.

I have lived abroad all my years of collaboration with RD Medical College. As I mentioned earlier, I traveled to Zambia in Southern Africa as a medical officer. The work there as a single doctor taught me my medicine. It also changed my perspective for health and not only health care. I learned public health in action and saw results much more extensive than a clinical care could provide. Measles vaccination in Zambia was an eye opener for me and I decided to persuade public health education, including epidemiology and not surgery (my speciality). I studied public health first at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and then at the University of Washington, Seattle, USA, and Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden. Education and work experience has provided me certain wisdom about health and development. When I look back, this has been my contribution to RD Gardi Medical College. I am an insider and outsider to this institution and the institution has given me love, respect and continuity for using my experience. I am proud that RD Gardi Medical College asked me to be the chief editor of their first journal. I look forward to this responsibility with the same zeal of self-reliance as RD Medical College has developed from nothing to a blossoming medical and research institution.

**Vinod k Diwan, Professor**

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