

Dear Friends of the Library,

India since the early 1990's has attempted to upgrade their industries and workforce to high tech. Education is a needed ingredient in these efforts.

India is doing as good or bad job as we, in leaving no child behind. This according to a Wall Street Journal front page article of April 5, 2011. Cited in the article was a company, 24/7 Customer Pvt. Ltd., that could hire only 3 of 100 Indian applicants. As a result, they are outsourcing their jobs to the Philippines and Nicaragua.

Does this sound like a story emanating from the U.S.? For the last several years, our low level (low level pay and knowledge) jobs have been offshored while high level jobs were left behind for U.S. citizens to fill (supposedly). As we pursued the high tech routes to high GDP, the high knowledge and comprehension level of employees fell behind. Or so it is emphasized by U.S. industrial representatives.

Good or bad depends on which numbers one uses as a measure – graduates or grasp of the basic knowledge.

The numbers. Between 50 and 55 percent of Indian 5th graders can only read at the 2nd grade level. India has increased potential to accommodate up to 5 million engineering students during any year. As of 2010, 75 percent of these engineering graduates and 85 percent of general graduates are unemployable by high tech industry. India has a population of nearly 1.2 billion, four times the U.S. population. India has 2 of the top 500 universities in the world. For comparison, the U.S. has 154; China, 22; Russia, 2.

In the U.S. the income chasm between rich and poor is growing. In India, where the chasm is far worse, the government is attempting to narrow the gap between rich and poor. In 2009, the newly passed "Right to Education Act," mandates that private schools must admit 25 percent of students whose families earn less than \$2500 per year – the only test for admission. Many think this lowers the education bar.

What seems to be the greatest deterrent to India's efforts is language – English predominantly spoken by the rich and Hindi predominantly spoken by the poor. And class prejudice – "I can't sit across the table from someone who mops my floors." When and where have we heard something similar said in this country? Perhaps we all have to have similar experiences.

George Cline,
President, Friends of the Library

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