

Editorial

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As I write this column, the big news coming in is that India has won the inaugural World Twenty20 championship. The victory is a testament to the power of youth: a team led by a vibrant young captain, playing fearless cricket in the face of fancied opponents, displaying all the advantages of youthful energy and exuberance, young minds that do not know the pressure of expectation or carry the burden of reputation. The nation rejoices as the future of Indian cricket passes on to Generation Next!



There is no doubt that the future of India lies in its youth. Our relatively young population (with a median age in the 20's) should prove to be an advantage in the coming years as this segment of the population enters its most productive years. But are we nurturing our youthful talent properly? Despite the phenomenal economic growth seen in the last decade, we have performed very poorly in several human development indices. A large fraction of our population lives in utter poverty; we have among the most malnourished children in the world; and the abysmal state of our rural healthcare system means that we have some of the worst infant and maternal mortality rates.

In science too, the power of youth is undeniable. Great scientists like Newton and Einstein did their path-breaking work while still in their twenties. The young mind is fearless and is better able to take those bold steps that are needed to usher in such paradigm shifts. Thus a young Einstein working out of a patent office is able to radically change our view of space and time, while a stalwart like Lorentz who knows the same equations is not able to take this leap. This is what prompted Max Planck to say, "Scientific theories don't change because old scientists change their minds; they change because old scientists die." But the young mind still has to be prepared to grab the opportunities that are presented, as exemplified by the featured scientist in this issue of *Resonance*, Victor Hess. A quirk of fate throws him towards research on radiation and atmospheric electricity, and he uses the opportunity to discover cosmic rays. And he is all of 29 years old.

But while we celebrate the power of youth, let us not forget that the older stalwarts have a role to play too: as coaches, teachers, research guides, etc. Because with age comes wisdom, and this is the wisdom that gets passed down through the ages.

