India set a target to eradicate polio, and achieved it by January 2011. Many global experts had predicted that India would not succeed. Their reasons were legitimate: India has not succeeded in meeting the target set for childhood immunizations, namely 90% coverage, but our achievement is only 61%. India has not controlled the many infectious diseases against which interventions are available, namely malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, cholera etc. Inequitable and inefficient use of products of technology and reluctance to use science in public health are two glaring defects in India’s health management system. Defeating prophets of failure, India specifically targeted the poliovirus, applied every intervention necessary, refined the vaccine through research, and pulled off success. It was like surgically removing a lesion in a person riddled with much pathology.

Was the economic investment of Rupees 1000 crores per annum worth it? Many had questioned the wisdom of targeting one among the so many neglected diseases and spending so much funds. Three elements justify our investment: humanitarian, human rights, economic. Polio paralysis, especially in the numbers India had been experiencing, is incompatible with human development. It is not enough to become wealthy, but we must also know how to spend wealth wisely.