

others make the topics fashionable, or those who bring different perspectives to existing problems. Most importantly, we should garland those who work on problems that are crucial to local contexts — even if they are of little interest to elite overseas universities or to ‘high-impact’ journals. Examples include endemic communicable diseases, groundwater contamination and traditional methods of biodiversity conservation.

India’s systems for peer review, grants, publications, jobs, awards and fellowships punish any potential future leaders in such ‘unsexy’ fields. Instead, the country should develop new scientific ethics and etiquette. The research community should value, for instance, collaboration with small neighbouring colleges or universities instead of recognizing only international alliances. India should create a new peer-review system, a new ranking of journals and new measures of impact — all tailor-made for our needs, problems, diseases, natural resources and educational system. We need to believe in ourselves and not just chase world rankings — as individuals, as institutions and as a country. The enemy is within. So is the solution.

RAGHAVENDRA GADAGKAR

Solve local problems

Professor of ecology, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore; and president, Indian National Science Academy

Indian science suffers, today more than ever, from government apathy. This is exacerbated by the fact that India tries to run on the same track as the most developed countries and the best endowed institutes in the world. Only a handful of scientists and institutions in India can afford it, and then only by sequestering an unfair share of the country’s scant funds. Even these players barely compete with their chosen peers — never really at the top, but in the ‘also ran’ category at best. This leaves most researchers and institutions with inadequate resources, and worse, feeling backward.

This is not the only model for success. If you cannot compete on the same track, you should try a different one. India should celebrate and encourage scientists who create their own research questions long before