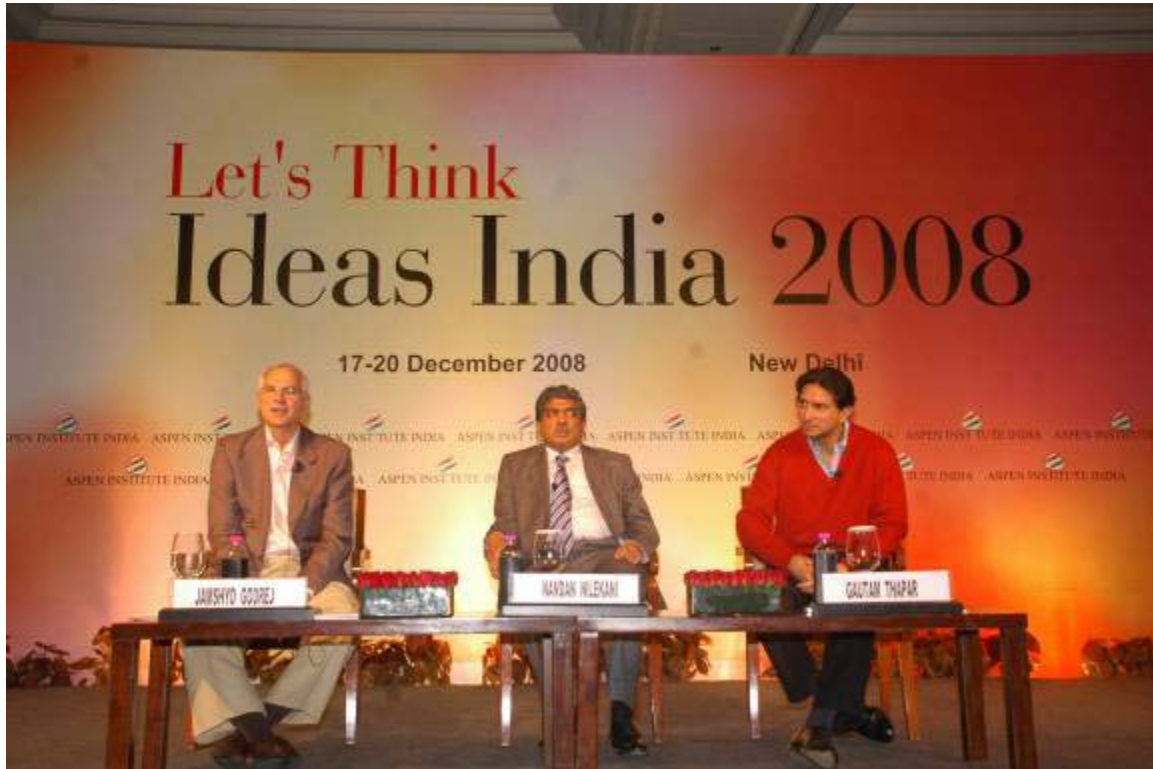


India at the Threshold of Big Opportunity



L-R: **Jamshyd Godrej**, Chairman, Aspen Institute India; Chairman and Managing Director, Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Co.Ltd.; **Nandan Nilekani**, Executive Co-Chairman, Infosys Technologies; **Gautam Thapar**, Vice Chairman, Aspen Institute India; Chairman, Avantha Group

Young India in an aging world today stands at the doorway of a huge opportunity. This was the message delivered at the concluding session of the four-day **Ideas India 2008** conference hosted by Aspen Institute India here today. The conference examined, evaluated and analyzed some of India's biggest challenges and opportunities.

Speaking at the session, **Mr Nandan Nilekani, Executive Co-Chairman, Infosys Technologies**, named the first of the big opportunities as the 'demographic dividend', which is that for the next 30 years the largest percentage of population in India will be of youth. But if we are not able to use this opportunity, the energy, discontent and anger of the youth can also turn it into a disaster.

The second resource we have is human capital. "A few decades back we used to think of people as burden, but now we think of them as capital", Mr Nilekani said. Other four resources that we already have are diverse entrepreneurship, technology, democracy and English language, which has today transformed from the language of the elite to the language of aspiration.

Taking a leaf out of his own latest book – *Imaging India: Ideas for the New Century* – Mr Nilakani said there are some areas on which we as a nation have complete agreement. Urbanization is no longer a dirty word. We are sure that we need primary education, infrastructure, and a single market.

There are certain things which we must do. The first is that we must use technology for improving governance and transparency. We have to evolve a new health model which revolves around wellness rather than cure for diseases, a pension or a social security scheme, clean environment and a new energy model. The energy model should not be based on the hydrocarbons. We should be able to show more economic growth with less emission of greenhouse gases.

For health, Mr Nilekani suggested a hub-and-spoke model for health, making full use of technology. He said, it is not feasible to have a full functioning hospital in every place.

Mr Gautam Thapar, Vice Chairman, Aspen Institute India; Chairman, Avantha Group, blamed the old labour laws for employment not keeping pace with economic growth. He said that as long as the labour laws remain the same the industry will prefer to use technology and machines rather than employ people.

Mr Jamshyd Godrej, Chairman, Aspen Institute India; Chairman and Managing Director, Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Co Ltd, thanked the participants and assured them the Institute will take the initiative in implementing the ideas generated during this conference.

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