I recently read an article that spoke about the experiences of a chartered accountant during his 5 year long stay in Africa. This person is a very eminent CA, who had been posted by the MNC in which he worked, to offer his services work in the economic sector of African countries.

His work involved him stating and revising laws based on privatization, poverty line adjustments, consumer rights, tax benefits, etc, meeting the presidents and prime ministers of many of the African states to explain to them his findings and theories and so on. The reason why I found his article very interesting was his honest depiction of the developing countries in this vast continent.

He starts by mentioning “I was 35,000ft off the ground, when I fell in love with this country”.

His reports carried invaluable information, that led me to conclude on some major areas of interest to the Indian government today.

He starts off by stating that-setting up of new industries and businesses in developing areas ought to be tough. But that wasn’t the case with Africa. People there are very hardworking and want to change their present scenario. It’s not like the only sector that booms would be IT or agriculture. Mining, fisheries, oil, cement, locomotives etc were all new additions to the previously unexplored territories of the African industrial sector.

Although a very detailed account of his findings were brought to light in that article, I don’t want to stress on all of them.

The one thing I noticed, is that the people of Africa are pragmatic. They don’t dwell on dreams and wait for miracles to happen. They have seen the worst they possibly can in terms of hunger, poverty, cleanliness and sanitation issues, unemployment and so on. They can’t afford to wait any longer.

Secondly, based on the experiences of the writer of that article, I can confidently say, that there is no substitute to local knowledge. In the article, the writer mentions an incident that he witnessed on one of his tours in the vast jungles of the subcontinent.

There was a South American company that had been routed by the then ruling government of Mozambique (an African country) to catch and train wild elephants and tame them into doing menial and labour jobs. Apparently the South Americans were having a very hard time chasing the wild and aggressive beasts all around the place, trying to inject them with a drug that could calm them down.

When for nearly 2 days they hadn’t any luck, a bunch of 10-12 local tribesmen happened to pass by and offered to help. Their method was a bit different..

They discovered a largely shallow area, devoid of any vegetation (it was a dried up lake area). They gathered at the center of the land, a variety of fruits, bamboo sticks, etc and started to make loud sounds with their drums and other musical instruments. In no time, a herd of wild elephants gathered around the lake and were ready to plunge in for their food that lay at the middle. Just at this instant, the tribesmen released their tame elephants also into the lake. A huge showdown of wild and tame elephants followed, which ended with the tamed ones exhausting the wild ones. The tamed elephants were brought out, and the wild ones were left in exhaustion and hunger for nearly a day. When they were completely drained of energy, the elephant handlers brought them out, leading them in a line which they followed and obeyed loyally.

This incident just added to my point, that ancient wisdom of the natives is the most invaluable of all.

Education elsewhere gives knowledge no doubt, but wisdom comes from within and is to not be undervalued. No matter how modern and efficient the South Americans were, it was the local Africans who accomplished the task.

This is where I’d like to take my stand on the issues of today in India.

We always needn’t follow the West. We always needn’t be modern. We have thousands of years of history behind us and everything has already been done before. We just have to dig deep and uncover the limitless amount of solutions that our forefathers have left behind for us.

Maybe on this path of history, we may make some startling discoveries that could change the face of the country. If Africa, a country that is nearly 20-30 years behind us in history can make it happen, then so can we. We just have to use our own resources in the right way rather than shifting to the prevailing methods.