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Post-Enlightenment Paradox: The Perils of Advancement

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***Abstract:** The dark- medieval ages plagued by religious mayhem and genocidal conflicts began to fade in the light of rising tides of questions, dissents, and skepticism which threatened institutional hegemonies of existing powers. Thinkers, mathematicians, philosophers and other scholarly men and women challenged the prevailing orthodoxies of mindless believers. The Flat Earthers die hard. However, a new causal perspective explained the effects of unexplained phenomena from natural disasters to human depravity. This article seeks to signify the rise of humanities and science in search of a civil—secular and egalitarian—society that values decency and human dignity. The ordeal of existence need not be catastrophic. It's imperative to overcome the serendipitous paradox of the Enlightenment.*

Keywords: The Enlightenment; Developmental Paradox; Ideology, Humanities, and Social Sciences

“Only wisdom based on self-understanding, not piety, will save us.”

Edward O. Wilson (2014: 15)

“A civilization tends to atrophy when its vision is lost, and imagination muffled by its arrogance.... Anti-state prefixes—*cartel, narco-, failed* and so forth—serve as euphemisms for a new anarchy breeds terror, violence wrapped in post-ideological opportunism”

(Mohan, 2015: 255). Over the decades, I have studiously assayed about human conditions that are dehumanizing (Mohan, 2011; 1992). While social sciences ought to be in the vanguard of radical change, their zeitgeist raises more questions than resolves any problem (Mohan, 2018; 1999). It's my hope that post-Enlightenment consciousness—its dreams and delusions—will succeed to save man from his/her own follies (2024).

“In modern life, we are encouraged to listen to our hearts, listen to our inner voices, and listen to our guts, but rarely are we encouraged to carefully and with intent to other people....Online and in person, it's all about defending yourself, shaping the narrative, and staying on message. Value is placed on what you project, not what you absorb,” writes Kate Murphy in her illuminating book, *You're Not Listening* (2019). Wisdom is not new. Past centuries are graveyards of lights that never fade away. Humans' collective moral dissonance is an outcome of what we failed to absorb. Civilizations' advancements changed the world we live in, but we are still not listening. This article is a brief quasi-analytical narrative of certain paradoxes, conflicts, and challenges that thwart the possibility of a safer and decent world. Now listen: We need to deconstruct the meaning and method of institutional structures that are melting down. Its implication is the need for a new Social Contract (Mohan, 2024) and awakening against the perils of dysfunctional structures.

“Writing,” says Sergio Ramírez, “is about finding what story you can make out of that thing you heard on the street, in coffee shop, image you saw. It's about finding that antenna, picking up on what others miss.”¹An analysis is offered here to unravel certain aspects of the problem that we confront in sciences and humanities.

I. 'Structure of Evil' Revisited

“I was captured by the Fascist Militia on 13 December 1943. I was twenty-four, with little wisdom. No experience and a decided tendency—encouraged by the life of segregation

¹Quoted by Benjamin Russell, ‘A Novelist Betrayed by What Helped Build.’ *The New York Times*, (Arts), September 4, 2023:C1.

forced on me for the previous four years by the racial laws—to live in an unrealistic world of my own. A world inhabited by civilized Cartesian phantoms, by sincere male and bloodless female friendships. I cultivated a moderate and abstract sense of rebellion.”

Survival in Auschwitz (Primo Levi, 1960: 13)

In *Consilience*, Edward Wilson signifies “the unity of knowledge” (1998). Social sciences, despite their emphasis on empiricism, positivism, and scientism have not yet attained a level of observation and interpretation that would present social reality in its true character. As a result of this subjectivity, we are unable to comprehend and posit what *social* is; what *science* means in the ever-changing, dynamic, and complex world². My analysis posits, heuristically, a three-dimensional framework for inquiry and discourse in the quest of knowledge.

A. Awakening:

Siddhartha, a royal prince, renounced the world and became the Buddha that has immeasurably liberated the world from its own hubris and madness. He was disillusioned by the prevalence of misery and human suffering. Once he achieved wisdom, he found the fundamental truth: There is suffering which has a cause. The awareness of cause-effect relationships is the foundation of knowledge, a fount and fulcrum of what has become science.

Issac Newton invented modern science. Galileo's discovery changed every bit of what has become of scientific knowledge. Even in the enthralls of death, he refused to accept *flat earthers'* dogmas. “It still moves,” he proclaimed. Frederich Neitzsche, likewise, changed the world of ideas, beliefs, and the whole Christian mythology and declared: *God is Dead*.

²I recall reading Ernest Becker's passionately written book *Structure of Evil* (1966). Its subtitle—*An Essay on the Unification of the Science of Man*—caused the rejection of two of my articles since I used a *sexist* language. I did not plead guilty. Also, I did not—couldn't—change the title of a well written book that I admired.

B. Revolt:

It's probably in human nature to revolt against oppression. The chains that enslave us are also harbingers of change. Revolutions in America, France, Russian, China and many other nations are triggered by the forces that suffocate human spirit. Revolutions that followed tyranny spewed lava that swallowed its own children. This cycle has a dialectical nature. People (*thesis*), tyranny (*antithesis*), and revolution (*synthesis*) have shaped and reshaped societies and their regimes. This perpetual process is progressive and regressive at the same time. Jr. Stalin, a rising scion in Tamil Nadu, has angered Modi and his BJP party by his provocative call to “abolish” the “Sanatan” (A Hindu belief system). While he claims it for gender and class equality, the believers of the Sanatan dharma call it a genocide of 80% Hindus. Social transformation is incomplete without structural and institutional deconstruction.

C. Ideological Fissures, Meltdown, and War:

Property, sex, and domination have been the main drivers of human pugnacity and war. Sociologist Michael Mann's new book *On War* (2023) “seeks to uncover the causes the causes of war across the globe, from the classical era to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.”³ Fred Kaplan reckons:

*“In the end, Mann comes up with three broad causes of war: ‘greed, status-honor-glory and the enjoyment of domination.’ ...Still On Wars is an enlightening haul for much of its journey and a brisk read too, surprisingly so far its destiny. Mann likens the ruling class balance-of-power games in ancient China and mediaeval Europe to ‘mafia-like protection rackets.’ ”*⁴

Mann's advice to the US is to engage in ‘peaceful intervention’ learning from imperial China: Paying tributes

³ Reviewed by Fred Kaplin, *The New York Times Book Review*, Sunday, September 3, 2023 (Retrieved September 3, 2023)

⁴ Ibid.

*to barbarians not to attack them. Cash payment, he argues, can buy off the reality of war. The US has given Egypt some \$70 billion in aid to let Israel live in peace but “spent \$3.5 trillion to wage war in Afghanistan and Iraq.”*⁵

Michael Mann-like theorists, despite good intentions, miss the basic elements that cause aggression, invasion, and war. It seems to me that he has not understood the underpinnings of *Social Contract*—let alone comprehending Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (Economics) and lessons of *Gita* and *Mahabharata*-- which was essentially a strategic framework to preempt violent conflicts that threatened societies and the state. The invention of ‘property’ and agriculture, as Rousseau proclaimed, was the foundation of a civil society. Hobbesian view of human nature—short, brutal, and nasty—dialectally supports Rousseauan dictum that freedom cannot be sustained without “chains.”

II. The ‘Third Rail’ of Development

“Beyond rights, obligations are the other cornerstones of a successful democracy—obligations between individual citizens as well as citizens and their government. Obligations—akin to what Danielle Allen calls ‘habits of citizenship’—are things that should happen but that the law cannot require. Without a culture of obligation coexisting alongside a commitment to rights, American democracy could well come undone. We need nothing less than a ‘Bill of Obligations’ to guide how we teach, understand, and conduct our politics.”

Richard Haas (2023: xiv-xv)

The *Third Rail* of a free society is *responsibility*—‘Chains’ as Rousseau proclaimed—which people like to detest. The cost of freedom is civil responsibility, an obligation that is crucial to avoid chaos.

Whose responsibility after all? The *individual* as most philosophers would proclaim. What about *society's* own responsibility to human-

⁵ Ibid.

social development. What we confront is a society in disarray. If society has failed, what's our obligation to sustain it as a necessary condition to incubate, nurture and develop for universal survival and well-being?

Global Development (Mohan, 1992) has certain post-material obligations which cannot be fulfilled unless three forces of violence are mitigated: 1) inequality; 2) war-territorial proclivity; and 3) hegemonic structures (of power and hierarchies). This encompasses noxious dualities of de-development: the ideological Left and Right; the North and South; and *freedom* and *unfreedom*. Extreme wealth and global poverty are rising simultaneously. *The Guardian* comments:

A group of more than 200 economists from 67 countries are urging the UN and the World Bank to act against global inequality, noting that worldwide poverty and extreme wealth are increasing simultaneously for the first time in 25 years. "Never has the fight to close the gap between the rich and the rest of us been more urgent," says Oxfam International head of inequality policy Max Lawson⁶.

Globalisation was instrumental in enhancing corporate wealth. It did provide jobs in China, India, and Bangladesh without addressing inequality. Globalisation did not seek to solve this unmitigated issue. Inequality persisted unabated. The main factors thwarting social and economic development may be discussed below.

A. Decadence

Post-Ideological promiscuity is awash with corruption of knowledge and soulless governance. The gulf between the conservative Right and neoliberal Left seem to narrow down since both fear eventual end. In *After Piketty* (Boushey, DeLong, and Steinbaum, 2017), Thomas Piketty himself writes about Reconciliation between

⁶<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox/WhctKKZGVzxJtxQKQsksZWjMLJxwpZqCLpctcvhhHRfjqR> ; (Retrieved July 18, 2023; Global Development in InterActionSmartBrief reported by *The Guardian*, July 17, 2023) in Congo region.

Economics and the Social Sciences⁷. Inter-disciplinary 'reconciliation' still does not achieve what I articulated in my interpretation of 'unification' (Mohan, 1999). Piketty's eloquence and depth is unmatched. If policy makers across nations would head to his varied analyses, both democracy and socialism-capitalism ... may strengthen each other without recriminatory politics which is mutually unproductive. Evidently, politics have never been without scruples.

From The British East India Company to the Russian Wagner group to the American Blackwater company, mercenaries have looted, plummeted, and destroyed cultures where instability and resources looked irresistible. Yevgeny Prigozhin, the chief of the Wagner who was recently died in a plane crash, has left a legacy which would change the nature of military force. States can outsource their operations; worse, the mercenaries with their own resources, could invade and control the vulnerable places where they can find power vacuum, minerals, and wealth. The 'new brave world' needs ore for its digital, electronics, and all AI tools of control and manipulation. As conflict entrepreneurs, these terrorist group—private armies—have found new pathways to enrich their clients and themselves. Sean McFate, author of *The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What they Mean for World Order* (2023) writes:

"If new conflict entrepreneurs managed to carve out a fief of rare earth minerals and deposits in the Congo region or Afghanistan which potentially has the world's largest deposits of lithium, they could come to control a strategic choke point in the global supply chain. They would have the power to move markets, blackmail nations and shape geopolitics, as the quasi-mercenary British East India Company one did."⁸

⁷https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/After_Piketty#:~:text=After%20Piketty%3A%20The%20Agenda%20for,Bradford%20DeLon (Retrieved July 20, 2023)

⁸ Quoted from *The New York Time* (Opinion), September 4: A 19

The call for ‘humanitarian aid’ under genocidal bombardment is the white settlers’ perpetual lie. Most human tragedies persist because rationality is blinded by decadent values and beliefs.

B. Hubris

The new hubris of power has unleashed the evil of alternate reality. Trumpian proclamations and tweets are ominous in principle and practice.

“I will obliterate the deep state,” Donald Trump roared from the portals of Westminster in New Jersey soon after he was indicted for 37 federal crimes in Miami, Florida (June 13, 2023). Deep State is a horrible construct. So are his delusions: “I am your justice”! “I am your retribution”!

Trump’s four indictments and history’s 1st Presidential mugshot adds a new chapter in the American democracy. Still the 45th President stubbornly claims that “crooked Joe” and U.S. Department of Justice have weaponized judicial system. And he did nothing wrong. What he calls, “American Carnage” may and may not be a reality. The alternate reality that conspiracy theorists perceive only represent denial and decline. Populism and authoritarian hate pervades the body and soul of America. A counter-Presidency is underway if watched closely the remaking of America and its implications at home and abroad. In a recent article in the *London Review of Books*, author Pankaj Mishra defines *Modi’s India* in a similar vein⁹. The G-20 conference in Delhi is focused more on India’s Modi, than her poor, disadvantaged, homeless people. Suhasini Raj reports:

“An action plan to keep away deadly dengue-carrying mosquitoes include ‘drone-based vector surveillance and concurrent anti-larval spray in the drains.’ Cutting out of large monkeys have been installed to keep away the packs of smaller monkeys that sometimes harass people. Videos emerged of municipal workers violently dragging away stray dogs. The

⁹ Cf. Pankaj Mishra, *The Big Con, Modi’s India, and the New World Order*, Vol. 45 No. 9 · 4 May 2023

Indian government has bulldozed homeless shelters, slums and illegal encroachments in New Delhi and put them behind white barricades and green shade nets in cities like Mumbai and Vishakhapatnam.”¹⁰

There is no ‘world order.’ The nation states and interconnected cultures seek identities at all costs. The result is a primal sense of coexistence is lost in the gales of authoritarianism.

C. Commoditization:

A professor at Columbia University, in *Marathan Man*, sarcastically tells Levy Babe (character of Dustin Hoffman, “Manufacturing doctorates is called progress.” Today professional-academic diplomas are commodities. One can get almost every diploma online. Of course, one must pay. This has demolished the hallowed walls of temples of learning. Un-or-under-subscribed programs will disappear if consumers are not buyers.

Academia must raise funds at all costs. Endowments, Sports, favors to the rich and elites constitute a nexus of corruption and perversion of institutions that were guardians of public trust. *The Nation* brings out a copious report ‘How Jeffery Epstein Captivated Harvard’ (August 7/14, 2023: 14-21/27). Michael Massing writes:

“For years after Epstein pleaded guilty in 2008 to soliciting and procuring a minor for prostitution, he socialized with Bill Gates, Woody Allen, Noam Chomsky, Leon Botstein, former Israeli prime Ehud Barak, private equity billionaire Leon Black, LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman, CIA director William Burns, and Lawrence Summers....The Summers-Epstein relationship illustrates the interlocking of intellectual and financial elites in an era of bloated capital accumulation...” (2023: 14).

¹⁰ See, “As G20 Hosts, India aims the Spotlight at Itself” by Suhasini Raj in *The New York Times* (International), September 6, 2023: A 6.

This Harvard-Epstein narrative is a sordid drama of hypocrisy and fraud in the temples of learning. Massing documents a hoard of billionaires, lawyers, and so-called scientists, and intellectuals who manufacture ‘knowledge’ and ‘innovations’ at the expense of scholars who have no access to the helms of power. It turns my stomach to read the names who defended a predator in the name of institution building: Martin Novak, Stevn Pinker, Glen Dubin, Alan Dershowitz, Kenneth Satr, and Larry Summers who befitted from Epstein’s wealth, girls, airplanes, and his palaces. In a prescient vein, I once wrote about the need for *Academic Forensics*. The following account will justify my suggestion based on knowledge and experiences in the academic world:

“In late November 2018, The Miami Herald published Julie Brown’s three-part series, ‘Perversion of Justice.’ In a year-long investigation, she tracked down more than 60 women said they had been abused by Epstein and [Leslie] Maxwell.... In July 2019, BuzzFeed, drawing on court documents, revealed that Dershowitz, in his initial defense of Epstein in Florida, had sought the help of Steven Pinker about the wording of a federal law, known as the ‘Internet luring statue’.” (Massing, 2023: 19)

Censorship of books and sensitization of curriculum is against all academic values. From Florida to Firozabad, one finds pernicious policies and practices that ban books. A society that does not ban guns and child pornography but burns books cannot be a safe place for intellectual development, let alone wellbeing.

III. Techno-Narcissism

“The Narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. He cannot live without an admiring audience. His apparent freedom from family ties and institutional constraints does not free him to stand alone or to glory in his individuality. On the contrary it contributes to his insecurity.”

Christopher Lasch (1978)

Loneliness is an epidemic. It literally shatters an individual’s mind, soul, and heart. In a consumerist culture, algorithms of therapeutic relief offer avenues of instant gratification. Triumphal capitalism has demolished a sense of existential connectedness. Racism, ethnic conflicts, and class conflicts further deepen isolation. The rise of *Gated Communities* has destroyed the idea of ‘community’ itself. If you are not rich, you are doomed to live the scourges of hopelessness.

One of the most important yet least recognized aspects of modern technology is limitless digitalism which has transformed the way people work, communicate, and live. Work and its modes have morphed into banality of isolation with grave consequences. Perhaps the I-Phone has the most pervasive impact on people’s lives. Its ubiquity is dangerously transforming. Columnist David French writes:

“Last week, The Free Press published a powerful essay with a provocative title: ‘I had a Helicopter Mom. I Found Pornhub Anyway,’ [sic] by Isabel Hogben, a 16-year-old girl. She wrote of discovering porn at age 10 on a website that had ‘no age verification’ and ‘no ID requirement.’ ... And what did she see after she clicked the link? ‘Simulated incest, bestiality, extreme bondage, sex with unconscious women, gangbangs, sadomasochism and unthinkable physical violence.’ ”¹¹

The ubiquitous I-Phone in the hands of immature and irresponsible people is a dangerous weapon. Digital and AI revolution is a Faustian bargain; it’s a multi-edged vehicle of destruction. Every aspect of life, culture, and civilization is impacted by these inescapable blessings and scourges. This post-Enlightenment paradox is both translucent and open. One can see the frequency of self-driven cars on the streets of San Francisco. They are now used for prostitution as well. Uber’s use of robot drivers may seem scary when perils of privacy may become threat to safety and public decency. The ultimate danger of

¹¹ French, David, ‘Ban Online Porn for Kids.’ *The New York Times*, September 4, 2023: A 18.

this AI-perversion is now inevitable when robots will begin to hallucinate and talk to each other as superior humans. This new dimension cannot be checked since amoral AI has no consciousness. Oppenheimer's Frankenstein is the *third rail* of innovation and discovery.

A. *The God that Failed:*

Deglobalisation: “Nearly all the economic forces that powered progress prosperity over the last three decades are fading,” the World Bank warned in a recent analysis. “The result could be a lost decade in the making—not just for some countries or regions as has occurred in the past – but for the whole world.” (Cohen, 2023: 1; 10). Globalisation failed to narrow the gap between haves and have-nots: ““Financial globalisation was supposed to usher in an era of robust growth and fiscal stability in the developing world. It ended up doing the opposite.” Jayati Ghosh, an economist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst asserted¹². “As Western investors became controlling shareholders in the railways, mines and plantations of the global South, the supposedly peaceful worlds of trade and finance became harder to distinguish from imperialism.” (Cohen,2023:10).

China has successfully alleviated poverty. Its new developmental model, aka **Globalisation2.00**, will one day transform the Global South once labeled as the Third World. From Brazil to Bangladesh, nations export raw materials to China in return for infrastructural uplift and consumer benefits which remained wealthy¹³ nations' comforts that attracted the poor and deprived in the East. G20 2023, in New Delhi, may not resolve international issues that bedevil economies of the developing nations.

This developmental shift, Noema's editor Nathan Gardels writes appeals South Globe in the mega task of poverty alleviation:

¹²Quoted by Patricia Cohen, in *NYT*, June 18, 2023: 10.

¹³<https://www.noemamag.com/china-embarks-on-the-next-phase-of-globalisation/> (Retrieved, July 22, 2023)

“When the Cold War thawed and unlocked the flow of trade and investment, American-led “Globalisation 1.0” sought to exploit this world market of aspirations, spreading the wealth that enriched local elites and bolstered the birth of a global middle class — while the majority in the Global South remained poor. The migration of capital from advanced nations also took the manufacturing jobs and opportunities of the working class at home with it, diminishing for them the dream others so admired.

“Even though the north star has dimmed, and populist hostility has grown in Europe as well as America, migrants from the left behind of the Global South still cross perilous seas, navigate tangled jungles and trek through inhospitable deserts to the borders of hope because they lack any chances at all in those forlorn places where fate had cast their destiny. Desperation as much as aspiration drives them northward despite daunting odds”¹⁴

Despite China- centrist perspective, we cannot ignore the West's counter-productive—asset/capacity/evidence based—orientation that developing nations seem to replicate. China's own economy is the throes of crisis. But its poor are in better shape than elsewhere. Post-Pandemic realities, climate changes, and failure of the capitalist economies have almost universally affected the human condition.¹⁵

The perils of “Financial Imperialism”¹⁶ have been compounded by Capitalist anxieties and Socialist insecurity. Various countries offer different narratives that warrant consideration from two main standpoints: i) How does a particular program (or policy) impact the

¹⁴ See, Nathan Gardels, “China Embarks On The Next Phase Of Globalisation: Its success at reducing poverty appeals to the Global South. Noema, July 21, 2013.

¹⁵See Cohen, Patricia, ‘Failure of Globalisation Shatter Long-Held Beliefs: War and Pandemic Highlight Shortcomings of the Free-Market Consensus,’ *The New York Times*, June 18, 2023: 1; 10.

¹⁶ Cf. The London Review of Books, July 23, 2023 (<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox/WhctKKZGXBGvTWbVBWkrGFDGKsRnLmQqBqZVkmSdVfxvFpqzqKwtkqcWCwgfxJqdMHPNkb>).

gulf between the rich and the very poor. ii) Are the political and social institutions fundamentally geared toward restructuring the sources of inequality and injustice? Economists usually avoid answering these questions. Sociologists are engaged in views and investigations that explain phenomena without attempting to root out the main causes. I have argued that poverty is a political rather than economic problem.

B. End of History or a New Beginning?

Today's sense of unease is a stark contrast with the heady triumphalism that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. It was a period when a theorist could declare that the fall of communism marked "the end of history" – those liberal democratic ideas not only vanquished rivals but represented "the end point of mankind's ideological evolutions." Fukuyama's fantasy was initially fraught with bias. Triumphant euphoria on the Right found some traction in the elitist circles. It did not last much. Ukraine, Gaza, Israel, and Sudan raise the flag heralding the "Return of the Leviathan."¹⁷

C. The 'Indispensable' India

The presidency of G20 at the cost of US\$100 million has established India as the "Fountain Head of Democracy" (Raj, 2023: A6). Xi's self-exclusion from this conference is a rebuke to India, however. China's insatiable hunger to grab the land of neighboring countries, especially India, is a red flag that global democracies fear. Above all, China sees India as a cultural-political rival. As Washington-Beijing tensions loom, a quad of 4 important democracies has made India an "indispensable" partner in the balance of power.

New Indo-American alliance is a bullwork against Chinese insatiable hunger for world dominance. *America's New Best Friend* is India under Narendra Damodar Modi's prime leadership as recently observed. *The Economist* explains "Why India is indispensable":

¹⁷ Cf. My forthcoming book *Return of the Leviathan* (2024).

"India's ascent is an uplifting story... You might think all this makes America and India as natural partners...America's foreign policy has always combined realism and idealism... India and America may not like everything about it but think of the huge upside. It may be the most important transection of the 21st century." (Ibid. p. 9)

If America had not endorsed Winston Churchill's villainous plot to divide India based on nefarious biases, a unified India would have been 20th century's greatest achievement. I question *The Economist's* basic assumption: "India does not love the West, Even so America needs it (Ibid. p. 9). India's love for the West is embedded in her colonial past. Post-colonial politics have used anti-western sentiments to sharpen native nationalism as a vehicle to attain power. Modi's *Hindutva* movement is a vehicle to achieve this goal. If you travel across the land, you may find people singing the hymns of the British Raj. I have known VIPs in India who thrive on their ant-American politics, but they send their kids to the US for education and greener pastures. "Its 18m-strong diaspora is thriving, from America to the Gulf" (Ibid., p.9). America does need a friendly country against the projected aggressiveness of China. It's interesting to see how Kissinger has changed his mind. "Indians are bastards," he told Nixon when Indira Gandhi visited the US. Now he "admires" India's balanced approach to foreign affairs. India's subconscious inferiority has been a boon and curse in this context. Her ambivalence has cost Indians their dignity and self-respect.

I learnt English in school. I continue to learn this beautiful language to date. I have nearly forgotten the literature of Hindi, my first language. If I had not gone to school and lean English, I might have starved, let alone prosper. My father had a dream that I would one day become an IAS officer. I worked very hard as a student. It paid off: I found a professor, mentor, and guide who enabled my quest for self-discovery. What I owe to Lucknow University cannot be narrated in prose. It's a feeling that sustains my trust in education as a means of survival with dignity.

Now Listen:

The institutional meltdown is a pervasive reality. Our ‘Social Contract’ does not work. Communication lags and mishaps cause most human and social catastrophes. Nature serially punctuates our miseries with her own furies. Climate change has transformed natural—all human-caused—vagaries. Fire, floods, storms, and unpredictable horrors are commonplace occurrences. However, human-cultural mendacity—lack of tolerance and understanding—continue to plague diversity and dialog. Xi Jinping’s “skipping G20 submit is a new low in India-China ties” (*India Today*, Cover, September 5, 2023). Udhayanidhi Stalin’s insensitive remark against “Sanatana” has triggered a hate-speech inferno on the Indian subcontinent. Amarnath Menon reports: “An incendiary remark of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) youth wing chief and Tamil Nadu sports minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, likening ‘Sanatana’ (synonymous for a Hindu religious code) to ‘dengue, mosquitoes, malaria and corona,’ and giving a call for eradicating rather than opposing it, has sparked outrage ...” (*India Today*, September 5, 2023). Sweden, a country I have always viewed as progressive and peaceful almost resembles with a hateful, reactionary place:

*“As Eid-Ul-Adha celebrations are underway world over. Sweden is in the spotlight for allowing protestors to burn the Muslim holy book, Quran. Outside the Swedish capital's main mosque on Wednesday. The demonstrations coincided with the first of three-day Eid celebrations. Iraq denounced the move, calling it racist. It could also hurt the former's bid for NATO membership before the bloc's summit in July. You may recall that Türkiye has been a roadblock in Sweden's formal induction into the NATO alliance. A NATO member itself, Ankara holds Stockholm accountable for sheltering Kurdish militants allegedly responsible for the 2016 coup.”*¹⁸

The *New York Times* Columnist Michelle Goldberg writes about The Coalition of the Distrustful in which Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and his

chiliastic passion for the “renewal of a lost golden age” is stated below:

“Waging endless wars abroad, we have neglected the foundation of our own well-being. ...We have a decaying economic infrastructure; we have demoralized people and despairing people. We have toxins in our air and our soil and our water. We have deteriorating mental and physical health.” (July 2, 2013: 5)

Hopelessness and despair tend to invoke political fantasies of the halcyon age with a terrible sense of guilt. *The dialectic of civilization*, as Freud and Marcuse theorized masterfully, involve the Prometheus myth and Oedipus complex:

“Culture demands continuous sublimation; it thereby weakens Eros, the builder of culture... . Originating in renunciation and developing under progressive renunciation, civilization tends toward self-destruction.” (Marcuse, 1966: 83)

While Indian democracy tends to repress its progress, its failure to sublimate is a self-destructive instinct. No one questions Modi’s abandonment of his wife. Deepika Padukone’s saffron bikini raises storms of repressed desires. President Biden’s unconditional love for a deeply flawed son looks admirable but denial of the existence of a granddaughter seems troublesome. Likewise, his enthusiastic support to Ukraine against Russian invasion seems heroic to unite western warrior nations, but lack of understanding for Vladimir Putin’s Russia, looks imprudent. The dance of Eros and Death (*Thanatos*) is puzzling. No wonder future AI systems will dictate humans how to use common sense in the wake of disorderly world. The failure of this civilization manifests the rise of a de-sublimated dystopia.

Laura Baisa reports: “An ‘ancestral bottleneck’ took out nearly 99 percent of the human population 800,000 years ago. Only 1,280 breeding individuals may have existed at this dramatic era of human

¹⁸<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOkEBSwHqfE> (Retrieved June 29, 2023)

history”¹⁹ The Corona 19 pandemic has threatened human extinction. We are in the throes of the Third World War. The nuclear holocaust is not a scientific fiction. Wildfires and unusual rains have a warning²⁰.

The squirrels splooting in burning Texas have a message for rapacious oil and energy corporations are responsible for climate change. Squirrels are presciently ahead of sluggish humans. My generation that grew out of fiscal, aesthetic, and political colonial oppression precedes contemporary revolt of the teens. The “triumph of the father” is indicative of the repressive Super Ego that culminated into this civilization. Freud’s theory of *polymorphous perverse* does help understand the complexity of unthinkable behaviors that have become ‘new normal.’ Rebellion with a cause is not a new phenomenon. Rebellions without a cause is borne out of anomie and alienation that people, especially young ones, find in a chaotic environment manifestly indicative of a broken society. Between ‘ontogenesis’ and ‘phylogenesis’ Marcusean observations are piercingly succinct, stirring, and instructive. Archaic heritage and ‘spiritualization of want’ constitute the core of ‘civilized repression’ that bursts itself in less than functional style and manner (1966: 273).

Marcuse influenced Jürgen Habermas. But his Kantian vision emphasized a “collective will” based on rationality and inclusive secularism. This post-national social theory can be seen against the prevalence of contemporary antithetical forces. Theorists like Habermas lose significance when the world is divided by ‘friend-enemy’ polarities. If “inviolability of human dignity” is seen as a universal project, a global community of intellectuals, politicians, and citizens must join hands to achieve a civil society that is founded on

¹⁹<https://www.popsoci.com/science/human-population-pleistocene/> (Retrieved September 1, 2023)

²⁰“Some of the potential reasons behind this population drop are mostly related to extremes in climate. Temperatures changed, severe droughts persisted, and food sources may have dwindled as animals like mammoths, mastodons, and giant sloths went extinct. According to the study, an estimated 65.85 percent of current genetic diversity may have been lost due to this bottleneck. The loss in genetic diversity prolonged a period of minimal numbers of humans who could successfully breed and was a major threat to the species.” (Ibid)

the rocks of equality, justice, and non-violence. This objective seems unachievable; it’s Platonic and less than pragmatic. Rationally, human dignity is an abstraction. The failures of socialism, communism, and capitalism on one hand and the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism on the other hand, mark the end of the *public sphere* that Habermas had envisioned as Kant’s heir²¹. “Bear in mind,” Edward Wilson reminds, [that] “the original Enlightenment died within philosophy but not within science. The more pessimistic philosophers may be right about social sciences, of course, but it is better to press on as if they were wrong. There is only one way to find out. The more forbidding the task, the greater the prize for those who dare to undertake it” (1998: 203).

“Humanity and I are sweethearts. It craves me and I log for it,
But alas—between us has appeared a rival who brings us misery.”
Kahlil Gibran²²

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²¹<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/07/why-jurgen-habermas-disappeared/> (Retrieved July 4, 2023)

²² Quoted from Neil Douglas-Klotz’s *Kahlil Gibran’s Little Book of Wisdom* (2019: 70)

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Violence Against Women with Specific Reference To Sexual Harassment, MeToo Movement, Acid Attack and Honour Killing

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Abstract: Every other day the phenomena of 'Sexual harassment', 'Acid Attack' and 'Honour Killing' are splashed across social media platforms, newspapers and T.V. News. The 'MeToo' movement as new movement is also a revelation of strong voices of women who faced sexual harassment. These phenomena construct the image of women's atrocities. The present paper is an attempt of analysis of these phenomena by using sociological perspectives. The theory of symbolic interactionism, Erving Goffman's concept of social stigma, C.H. Cooley's Look Glass Self and logics of Alfred Schutz are taken into consideration during the construction of present narrative. The views of Nancy Frazer, Karl Marx, Vandana Shiva and of Max Weber are also given importance. The paper is a synthesis of empirical data theoretical frameworks.

Keywords: Violence, Sexual Harassment, MeToo, Interactionism, Look Glass Self, Social Stigma

Introduction

The pioneering works of Advocate Flavia Agnes, herself a victim of domestic violence and a crusader against domestic violence, Justice Indira Jaisingh, Fatima Beebi, Late Justice Leela Seth, Justice Sujata