

NATURE'S GIFT VS INVENTION

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BELIEF



Indian rock-cut architecture temple of Gupta period 3rd century BC

PURPOSE



Roman aqueduct 3rd century BC to bring water into cities for public use

Can nature alone solve all the problems of seven billion people in the world? In the current situation, science has invented a Covid vaccine to save people's lives in record time, unprecedented from the past. If the world had no invention, less people with low lifespan living with whatever nature has gifted, they would have had a spiritual life. In today's high population complex world, can gifts of nature without science save people's lives and livelihoods?

At the same time, Indian spirituality has always evoked a great deal of interest in the west for its non-materialistic value system. For Indian society, spirituality is seeking individual peace and enlightenment while appreciating nature's gifts. For the west too, it is an elevated form of spirituality, not associated with religion. But when westerners want to practice Indian spirituality, it often becomes an accessory, an alternative possibility for them. The question is, can India survive today only with nature's gifts?

CONTROL OVER NATURE

History and archaeology tell us that the seed of inventions started from ancient Egypt 3100 BC, the Middle East Persia 2000 BC, China 868 BC. In Europe, from ancient Greek 1300 BC culture onwards, western scientists, philosophers, artists and intellectuals have always wanted to have control over nature and the planet. They identified that because human beings have intelligence, they have the freedom of expression, ability and power to change everything in every domain. So merely existing in nature's gift, like other living creatures do, can never be enough.

In particular, the separation of religion and the state in the 17th century fuelled invention and the fully fledged application of inventions have dramatically changed the world. That's why western culture is totally associated with the inventive mindframe, with the higher aim of commanding nature and the world. This mindset has penetrated to the mass public in the west because they have seen and enjoyed the benefits of scientific inventions.

The most admirable scientific method of western inventions has been the follow-up with the skill of applying process, having an archival system and repeatability. Invention alone can be like lightning, it comes and disappears if there is no mathematical process, or an archival system to preserve and record the precedence. Any new invention therefore has a base which comes from the process and archival system. So repeatability of invention becomes accepted for the public's day to day usage.

For example, the Middle Age windmill was a mechanical device with a process to generate power day or night in the old times. The scientific structure of all windmills is

exactly the same, the decorative part could be different. From that Middle Age windmill to today's wind turbine is the visionary part of invention, how a scientific idea can be contemporarized due to process, archive and repeatability.

The West has a very strong religious single-god centric society, but invention and the freedom to express have elevated them from religious dogma since the 17th century. At the same time, it made them very materialistic. We can always criticize the western scientific world which has brought huge destruction to the world's ecosystem. However, we cannot ignore science which has hugely extended the lifespan of human beings, helped to bring in convenience and comfort in living life, upto reducing hunger and poverty.

This power of invention and emphasis on materialism has raised the desire level of western people extremely high. The result has been their conquering different countries with the help of firearms, subjecting their exploits to slavery and colonialism, then achieving and preaching democracy in the modern world, and reaching upto Mars.

NATURE'S GIFT

In this context, Indian society in general has remained totally dependent on nature's gifts leading to inculcating huge tolerance level, and living in harmony with nature. Invention driven desire is not a part of Indian culture.

Western colonial culture brought in some level of desire for material items that has since contributed to convenience or ease of living for a section of Indians. But what colonial culture actually did was to make Indians oriented towards serving on command as a hangover of slavery, to serve as a matter of duty rather than want anything as a desire to possess. So at the mass level, Indians are more duty driven than inventive desire centric.

Freedom of expression in India is very different from the western expression of freedom. Indian spirituality is not dogmatic; it is not focused on a single God, nor is Hindu philosophy a religion that tries to convert others to follow any god or religion. So India has inherited a non-dogmatic freedom while being non-materialistic, satisfied with nature's gifts, and with spirituality that manifests huge tolerance and harmony.

Since the 20th century, modern western culture has been highly inspired by Hindu philosophy. Indianness has created a huge dent in the pop culture of the 1960s, in the entertainment industry and even among inventors.

Just imagine, the country that dominated India for 200 years and left in 1947, had their legendary entertainers come seeking Indian spirituality 20 years later. That was the Beatles, the most successful act of the 20th century, who came to India in search of stimulation and Hindu spirituality (not religious). This kind of totally non-dogmatic, non-materialistic philosophic culture which does not exist in the west strongly influenced the music of the Beatles.

Embracing Indianness in their songs, George Harrison had said, "Meditation is a means to genuine understanding of the world," and John Lennon wrote to a fan, "Through transcendental meditation all things are possible." Even Apple's Steve Jobs, who longed to be enlightened to find his inner self, spent time in India during his late teens. He returned to the US as a Buddhist, saying his faith in human intelligence and technology was rejuvenated in India.

TWO TYPES OF INVENTIONS

The trajectory of western invention is never limited on any span of time, it has continuous movement, like water on a slope. There are largely 2 types of invention. The first is self initiative for discovery of the unknown which the west has mastered. The second is invention based on necessity. The gene of fundamental invention has been ingrained in the west, and western inventions have become the global norm.

Southeast Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China have taken western inventions and innovatively transformed them either by miniaturization or by making them consumer friendly and glamorous. These countries took the path of optimizing and scaling western inventions as a commercial act to attain a position of economic strength in the world. They have isolated industrialization and materialism from their own Buddhist religious belief, which is overcoming suffering caused by desire and ignorance of reality's true nature which is impermanence and non-existence of the self.

Southeast Asians have found a commanding solution by perfecting western invention in the product industrial era.⁷

Skill, quality, scale, cost advantage and the value of time score very highly to govern the global economy. They have never claimed they invent, but they reproduce by bringing a wide level of convenience with cost. An example: All Apple products that command a premium in the global market are made in China. As brand worth, Apple is higher than Samsung. But Samsung addresses a wide economic range of consumer profiles by democratizing the mobile phone with affordable versions for all classes of people. When you use Samsung, you never feel you are using a sub-quality product.

In contrast, India has mastered the IT service industry thanks to digital technology, by offering low cost, decent English spoken technicians in large number. But Indian IT service has not been able to replace California's Silicon Valley inventions or create a replica of that Silicon Valley in India. Of course creating an inventive Silicon Valley may not be in the agenda of India's IT industry.

The inventive culture of the western world creates unlimited desire for human society at large. On the other hand, Indian philosophy and culture drive the extreme

acceptance of a non-materialistic lifestyle to inculcate tolerance and harmony of life among those who embrace this non-religious spirituality. For example, Indian rock-cut temple architecture of the 3rd century Gupta period has tremendous art and craftsmanship. But it is not the same as building something new from an inventive mindframe, like the ancient Roman aqueducts developed at around the same time. These engineering marvels used gravity to transport water along stone, lead and concrete pipelines and into city centers.

STRAIN OF CONTRADICTION

In our contemporary time, Indian society is combating its ingrained culture of executing duty vs. controlling nature to address desire. The impact of a tolerant mindset appreciating nature's gift is not compatible with western society's quest of invention to contradict nature in pursuit of human aspiration, from need to unlimited desire.

It becomes a total clash when you try to superimpose the inventive mindset of desire on top of the tolerant mindset of quietly accepting nature's gift. The two can work perfectly separately, but not in a superimposed situation.

Southeast Asian countries have successfully separated their religious belief from their work of reproducing western inventions with high refinement. They practice their religion but privately; in the industrial world, they are focused only on skill and global delivery excellence with consistency and sensitivity for high quality.

India is a country of diverse religions. Even Hindu followers, which form the majority population, prioritize their rituals towards multiple gods and goddesses although Hinduism has no religious dogma.

So India remains a country of duty, belief in god as savior and in contradiction with modernity. In no way is this any criticism, rather it is mirroring reality. Yoga, non-violence, being non-demanding, non-materialistic, satisfied with the minimum, performing one's duty to elders, to family, to work and to any chosen god, and respecting nature's gifts, all these are seen as a part of that Indian expression of spirituality.

