



## Viable Solutions for seemingly Intractable Problems

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### Abstract

*Life is filled with seemingly intractable problems. But life wisdom affirms that if there is a problem, there must be a solution. Or better yet, the solution to the problem lies within the problem itself. Problems have their roots in disharmony. Disharmony arises when a part separates itself from the whole and acts independently of the wider reality of which it is a part, as financial markets have separated themselves from the real economy and economy has detached itself from social and ecological consequences. Insistence on out-moded approaches under new conditions generates intractable problems, as when the framework of a heterogeneous nation-state is employed for the dominance of a single ethnic or religious group. Knowledge and culture are the supreme values of a society and core element of its capacity for accomplishment and development, yet both tend to be exclusively possessed by elites for their own benefit, rather than freely distributed to maximize their impact on society as a whole. Society evolves by the transformation of ignorance into knowledge. Life evolves by organization. The linking and integration of social organizations spur development. Mind itself is an organization and powerful force for development. Energy makes organization more efficient. Any problem can be solved by raising the effectiveness of energy by converting it into skill or capacity and transforming it into power through organization. What one person sees as a problem is an opportunity for another with wider vision. The difference in perception accounts for the difference in levels of accomplishment. So, those with the right perspective see opportunities where others see insolvable problems. Current problems are the result of irrationality, refusal to benefit from past experience and insistence on repeating past errors. Modern science, which was born to fight the superstition of religion, has become a source of superstition. Fully availing of the latest advances for the widest benefit of humanity is a simple and effective principle for solving apparently intractable problems. Problems exist at various levels; what works on one level may not work for the other. Solutions are possible for any problem because man is always free to draw on solutions from a higher plane.*

Life is filled with problems. Rare are the few wise people who look at problems as disguised opportunities. The Adwaitic philosophy of India looks at life as something illusory and consequently feels problems are illusory too. When work refuses to progress and stagnates we feel there is a problem. European settlers seeking freedom immigrated to America and found there an unrestricted atmosphere free of social restrictions and mental superstitions. They came to feel that *if there is a problem there must be a solution*. In the 1860s the citizens of Chicago realized that they had built their nascent city on low lying areas

subject to flooding and decided to raise it. In one notable incident they were able to raise a four-story hotel five feet above the ground when the hotel was functioning. A century later their descendants sent a man to the moon and safely back again. Such achievements are not possible without a glimpse of the infinity in life.

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Life is arranged in such a way that what is considered a problem to one person is not a problem for another. Spiritual philosophy has declared that *“all problems of life are problems of harmony.”* Ironically, marriage which is sought after by men and women as a means to increase their happiness becomes a source of disharmony and unhappiness for many. One loses harmony when mind is divorced from the body or from external reality, or when thought is divorced from logic or rationality. For example, the science of Economics is part of the larger society and is meant to operate for the welfare of society. But over the years it has become disconnected from the rest of society and functions independently and to some extent detrimentally. Economics advocates growth for growth’s sake even when it results in widening levels of inequality and ecological damage. Financial markets in pursuit of short term speculative profits function in a manner that is increasingly divorced from the real economy that undermines real economic development, human welfare and social stability. The creation of 70,000 nuclear weapons by the superpowers in pursuit of increasing levels of national security and the perpetuation of the veto power by the P5 at the UN are some inexplicable instances of thought divorced from logic and rationality.

Life has moved away from its primitive origins and has become civilized and sophisticated. Still the inherent tendency of man is not to change. He insistently seeks to handle new problems in the old ways that created them as if nothing had changed, like the Boxers who, convinced of their invulnerability, faced modern armies with primitive weapons. Such an approach unnecessarily prolongs problems or converts them into situations that defy solution. Insistence on out-moded approaches makes the problem even more intractable.

A modern state is a political entity founded for political reasons and intended to accommodate heterogeneous populations. When religion is made the primary basis for its inception, its very birth is likely to be attended with social strife and prolonged military conflict. The problem results from the initial conception and defies solution without correcting the original premise.

Marx predicted a violent working class revolution. Industrialized England seemed the logical place for it to surface. The world became alarmed and tried to prevent it as far as possible. Instead, the response came from agrarian Russia which was still in the grips of serfdom and did not meet any of the conditions Marx had envisioned for launching a

proletarian revolution. Though the call was for freeing the proletariat from his fetters and turning him into a free individual, the way the revolution was implemented in the Soviet Union exchanged one form of serfdom for another, leading to the very liquidation of the individual. The natural solution would have been to remove the fetters of serfdom and allow the people to develop naturally in an atmosphere of freedom rather than trying to develop them violently.

Society has developed knowledge and culture into supreme values. They represent the highest achievements of civilization and their gradual extension to the entire society is the assured path for continued social progress. It is the responsibility of those who have acquired these treasures to extend them to others. But the tendency of elites—the aristocracies of class, caste, wealth, military and political power—is to retain these values exclusively for themselves. When the part refuses to raise the whole society to a higher level, what follows is a violent reaction that leads to beheading a few thousand individuals or a general decline of the whole society. Though the immediate source of trouble may be removed, as it was in revolutionary France in 1789 and revolutionary Egypt a few years ago, the society which has lost its old leadership typically resorts to restoring the lost social order and monopoly on power under a new label. Thus, communism supplanted Czarism in Russia and plutocracy supplanted monarchy in the West.

Life is characterized by many important principles: One is that *one moves down in order to rise to a greater height*. Division and conflict are endemic characteristics of life based on the tendency of mind to view reality in terms of mutually exclusive opposites and contradictions. Life progresses through mild struggle that takes on the appearance of strife. *Life validates desire which aims at delight*. Society evolves by the transformation of ignorance into knowledge.

One of the most instructive of these principles is that *Life evolves by organisation*. There used to be times when history was described as the history of kings. Later it changed into the history of people. Studying life as the history of organization will show how at each stage humanity has resolved its problems by greater organization. Organizations are formed from the interrelationship of systems. Systems come into being by the organization of acts into chains of activities. When two organizations merge, they become all the more powerful, as in the merging of transport and communication to create the modern air transport industry or the merging of education and printing. Thus, the principle for solving problems is to raise the effectiveness of energy by converting it into skill or capacity and transforming it into power through organization. The Bengal Famine of 1943 resulted from a breakdown in the organization of food distribution. A military general became the Viceroy and solved that problem by improving the organization.

Generally, it can be said that Europe where logical mind is developed does not face the same type of problems that confront Asia where logical mind is less developed but spiritual mind is more developed. Mind itself is an organization and therefore problems created by superstitions will be absent where mind prevails. Though railways are present in both places, the mental value of punctuality that is appreciated in Europe ensures that trains come on

time, while the same is not true of India where punctuality is not valued. Deficiency in a host of other related values explains the difference between a developed country and a developing one. USA saw the value of delivering letters overnight and developed FedEx, which became a multi-billion dollar corporation and founded a whole new industry.

It can be said that *the efficiency of a nation is decided by the energy of the population*. The energy is generated by freedom, education, individuality and initiative, etc. Where a village youth perceives a problem, the same problem may be perceived as an opportunity by an urban youth. *This is true of nations, populations and organizations*.

This difference in perception can account for the difference between an upper-middle class and a lower-middle class family. The former sees the situation as a great opportunity, while the latter sees the same situation as an intractable problem. *What matters is one's mental equipment and attitude with respect to the circumstances.*

In the last 70 years or so the world has been largely free of hot wars and since 1991 of Cold War as well. As a result, the fighting energies of war have been converted into productive energies geared towards prosperity. Almost simultaneously, the world witnessed the rapid development of higher types of organizations, for air travel, global communications, international financial transactions etc. The advent of Visa, credit card and the internet organized the energies of global society and infinitely multiplied the world's wealth. But what has been the response of society? It has created job less growth, tax evasion, rampant speculation, unseemly accumulation of wealth and widening inequalities. Disconnecting money from the economy, it turned a surplus of productive wealth into a destructive force. It converted opportunities into seemingly insoluble problems. The opportunities were great occasions to lift emotional man to the level of mental man who can lead a life of leisure and culture. Therefore, *those who have the right view are able to see viable solutions to these situations*. The essence of what has been said above is that Man is the center of his life. It is up to him to choose to lead a heavenly life or choose to lead a life of problems, which unfortunately he seems to prefer.

A state should be political in origin and not based on religion. A theocratic state will have all its energies diverted to support fundamental beliefs as a result of which it will degenerate into poverty, violence and superstitions and many other things. The one meaningful solution to this problem would be to abolish the religious basis on which the state is founded.

Theoretically, *current problems are no different from problems in the past. They come mainly due to disharmony, irrationality, refusal to learn from past experience and insistence on repeating past errors*. When an attempt is made to solve problems of a higher plane through methods of a lower plane, the problems only get more complicated. One common experience is that the man who tries to eradicate evil very often succumbs to it. *Modern science was born to fight the superstition of religion. Now we find that it has generated its own superstition*. Its respect for the social status of a scientist only reinforces such superstition. It regards

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every university professor of Philosophy as a real philosopher, making a mockery of the term. *The capacity to develop a total blindness to events is a crude primitive mental attitude.* A truly scientific attitude is to not ignore any event however singular or inconsistent with currently prevailing theory.

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*“There are no insoluble problems in the world.”*

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The Greek state has developed a financial crisis and the Greek people are asking for a better alternative. They vehemently oppose the proposal to solve the problem through greater austerity measures. The IMF and a growing number of international experts support the view that further austerity will only aggravate the problem and result in a further default. Yet the Eurozone insists on imposing a solution which is sure to fail.

Since the end of World War II the world has demonstrated its capacity to raise production 30 or 50 times. *Global per capita income has increased 84 fold since 1800.* This multiplication is not confined to income generation alone. Similar progress has occurred in every field. Wealth created by the general progress of society belongs to the society, not to any particular individual. Equality was long ago recognized as an essential principle in politics, where democratic values now rule. The same equality is valid for economy as well, without which true political equality is unattainable. Indeed, economic equality is the precursor to political equality. *Only when both of these prevail at the same time does social equality become real.* Beyond that lies psychological equality which comes from inner growth and education. While monarchical regimes came to an end with the arrival of democracy, *economic equality can come only when prosperity is equally shared by all in the society.* While each man must earn his income by work, technological progress is something owned by society at large. Technical progress is not the property of corporations. *Guaranteed employment ensures economic democracy.* Speculation is ruinous for economic health and must be banned while the right to employment must be made compulsory. There should be no restriction to extending educational benefits to lower income groups.

When problems arise, they can be solved by resorting to first principles. Surely the world cannot be oblivious to its past successes. It is folly to keep repeating past errors. Twenty-five years ago Yugoslavia suffered from run-away inflation and a top World Bank economist was consulted for a solution. He had a certain solution and was made head of Yugoslav Central Bank. He implemented it and brought down hyperinflation to single digits in ten days. His method was to activate the local economy. Greece can multiply its wealth by even fifty times if it wants. The local people are right to demand that the austerity measures be scrapped. The USSR was dismantled from the inside. A sincere appreciation of the situation led to her demise. A long history of clever diplomacy has led to her public life becoming hypocritical and something of a sham. Similarly, science is fostering its own superstitions. There are no insoluble problems in the world.

A simple and effective principle for solving apparently intractable problems is to fully avail of the latest advances for the widest benefit of humanity. When there is severe food scarcity, it is possible to respond to it in a way that benefits the farmer who produces the

crops. India's Green Revolution can best be understood from this perspective. The principle applied was to utilize the latest advances fully for the benefit of farmers. The advances were new agricultural production technology based on hybrid varieties of wheat and rice and introduction of a national organization for procurement and marketing of surplus production. The benefits were to ensure a higher profit to the farmer even in times of surplus production by introduction of a minimum floor price. Today the threat of nuclear weapons still remains very real and great. Now we have the internet, which did not exist until after the end of the Cold War. The damaging effects of radiation are now well documented and we now have a system by which the real facts about those dangers can be widely disseminated to inform the general public everywhere. If done, public opinion would make it very difficult even to store nuclear weapons anywhere. This is a viable simple solution for a problem of great magnitude.

The world of finance has been in a great upheaval since 2008 and wrought great suffering on countless millions. There ought to be a solution. The solution is to produce much more wealth and distribute it equitably. It is not like there is only one way to multiply wealth. Nothing prevents us from using all available methods. An organization called "GameChangers 500" is promoting the value of B-corps, 'for-benefit' corporations, which are now legally permissible in 23 states of USA. GameChangers 500 has introduced a new measurement system to assess the commitment of companies to socially beneficial goals such as ecological conservation, full employment, education and community development. They cite studies to show that *corporations promoting socially beneficial objectives actually outperform other corporations in terms of growth and profitability and are more successful in attracting and retaining loyal employees and customers than those which pursue profit as their one and only goal*. Their success is based on the principle of self-giving. Underlying it is another principle, the more one gives, the more one will receive.

These principles are true and applicable to all subtle forces. As wealth is a subtle force, it too responds to this approach. People in Germany and Netherlands seem to believe that helping Greece out of their financial crisis will be at their expense. Therefore, they oppose any bailout. But the method we are advocating is to create more wealth inside the Greek national economy. This is an initiative that will make all the countries richer and eliminate opposition. A former UNESCO chief regretted that on a daily basis some \$3000 billion is being wasted on arms purchases at a time when millions of people are dying of hunger. All sane voices would say that those funds should go to feeding the poor. But the fact is that *all poor nations can create more wealth than they need*. This they can achieve through a policy of self-help which will hurt no one.

All nations without exception have passed through a phase of corruption on their way to prosperity. Prosperity is a physical value which is achieved by hard work. But integrity is a mental value which requires centuries to develop and it comes out of cultural restraint. *Corruption has been prevalent in all developing countries for several decades*. The more a leader tries to eradicate it, the greater is its growth. Here we have to understand the truth about corruption as a phenomenon of social development. *When thus viewed, the regret vanishes*. Anand Dairy in India was well-known for its corrupt ways before V. Kurien took

charge in 1949. Within a short time he converted Anand into the most efficient cooperative in the country. In 1965 Kurien was appointed head of the National Dairy Development Board and he extended the Anand model throughout India to usher in the White Revolution. Corruption in England, other European countries and USA was eliminated in a century by a natural process that *occurred unconsciously by the growth of these societies*. Rising levels of education, the self-respect which education engenders, and greater organization of the whole society gradually eliminated corruption. Today it can be abolished much more quickly by incorruptible leadership. What took a century in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century may be accomplished in a few years in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Why it should be so can also be explained. Even corrupt societies have certain pockets that are free of corruption. We can start with that as the basis and begin working from there. The process will be greatly facilitated if procedures are made transparent. Transparency eliminates corruption. A question may be asked about what to do with countries that lack honest leadership. It is possible to create a small core of honest leadership, as was done in India during the last decade. *When corruption saturated the body politic, it produced its very opposite as a natural consequence.*

A truth of human nature is that man enjoys confusion and chaos and the intensity generated in coping with the problems. In philosophy this is referred to as the taste of ignorance. This was understandable so long as only a small portion of humanity was educated. But now when the majority of the world's population is literate, social evolution can move from ignorance to knowledge. It is worthwhile examining the history of humanity over the past thousand years to understand how in each century humanity improved its ways and to *beneficially apply that knowledge to life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. We will discover that no longer need we rely primarily on physical means where social, psychological and mental methods are now possible, more rapid and more effective. Any approach that is not based on rationality should be discounted.

Problems and solutions exist in a scale from physical and vital to mental and spiritual. *Solutions based on the same plane will work. Solutions from a higher plane will be far more effective.* Solutions drawn from a lower plane will not solve any problem; they will only aggravate the problem. US President Franklin Roosevelt stopped the panic that had closed 6000 American banks in 1933 by appealing psychologically to the American people, when all economic solutions had failed. Churchill led Britain's successful defense against the Nazi invasion by appealing to the patriotism, pride and love of freedom of the English people when the rest of Europe had surrendered to Germany's military might. *Solutions are possible for any problem because man is always free to draw on solutions from a higher plane.*

Morris Goodman was critically injured in a plane crash and was completely paralyzed by multiple fractures of his cervical vertebrae so that he could neither move, breathe, nor even speak. Physicians said he would not survive a week. Goodman indicated his intention to survive and recovery by blinking his eyelashes in response to questions posed. Within a year he walked out of the hospital on his own strength. In another well-documented case, an editor of *Life* went into shock after receiving a penicillin injection and his vital signs indicated imminent death. He later reported feeling the cells of his body dying one after another. When the sensation of disintegration reached his heart, he made a conscious decision not to die and

the process began to reverse. To the amazement of the attending physicians, he recovered and was able to narrate his experiences to the press.

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The problem of famine and the challenge of increasing food production are physical, but they were addressed by C. Subramaniam, India’s Food Minister, at social, psychological, organizational and mental levels. He instituted organizational arrangements to ensure dissemination and demonstration of new technologies, purchasing and distribution of food surpluses, education and training of farmers and extension staff, and revamping of agricultural research. Psychologically he appealed to the vital interest of farmers, providing them with incentives to maximize output. Moreover, he appealed to the individuality of the farmers, saying the nation’s honor demanded that the country become self-sufficient in food production. Green Revolution succeeded in doubling India’s food production within a decade, because it was based on a psychological solution instead of a physical one.

A similar situation exists in the field of education in India and many other countries, where the methodology is still largely physical. The process relies on age-old methods of repetition, rote memorization that predate the printing press and much less on the exercise of mental understanding. It still relies on the physical delivery of lectures to passive students which also predates the wide availability of books and today’s instantaneous access to information. Experimentation with on-line educational methods has amply demonstrated the superior speed and quality of learning that can be achieved by a shift in method from passive learning through lectures to active classroom interactions between students and teachers. The encyclopedia of information now easily accessible over the internet has relieved the necessity of burdening memory with the exponentially expanding body of information, freeing up mental energy for higher forms of activity and vastly enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education. Education can now evolve reliance of physical methods based on memorization to mental methods of higher understanding.

FDR solved the US banking crisis by resorting to first principles. Churchill solved the problem of defending Britain against Nazi Germany by appealing to the patriotic sentiments of the people, which was a psychological approach. *India used the spiritual principle of non-violence instead of an armed uprising to win freedom from the British through a peaceful transfer of power by the House of Commons.* Solutions can be found to seemingly intractable problems by applying the latest tools and principles and acting from the highest plane.

Generally, problems do not assail a person who marches in step with the world that is evolving. Problems come to those who refuse to march along and, even more, to those who insist on reversing the march. Arresting the march is a fertile breeding ground for fresh



problems. Reversing the march makes those problems intractable. If we stop the reversal and take a look around, we find solutions to what appeared to be intractable problems.

Thought was born in Greece and spread all over the world from there. Now she is in big trouble. She has been asked to accept austerities but has refused to do so and made her intentions known through a referendum. The fact of the matter is that Greece does not need Europe but Europe needs Greece. It can make a very good contribution to the wealth of the EU and motivate other economies to pull the EU out of the present crisis. The behavior of Greece needs to generate political authority commensurate with the monetary power that thus emerges. Should this occur, Greece can once again become a leader of the world.

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